JULY 1981 NUMBER 41

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THE SPACE GAMER

THE MAGAZINE OF ADVENTURE GAMING

Special D&D Issue

"WHO AM I?"
BY GARY GYGAX

(YOUR NAME) AND THE HOLY GRAIL
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In This Issue

It seemed as though the most widely known of all fantasy games deserved its own special issue . . . so here we are with a D&D *Space Gamer.* Our leadoff article is a story by Gary Gygax himself. He details the quandary a game designer feels when is company is TOO successful, and he has to choose between game design and business. I learned a lot from Gary's article – maybe you will, too.

For you Monty Python fans, we've got "(your name) and the Holy Grail." Like last month's adventure supplement on Tschai, it can be pulled out of the magazine. Insane role-playing in the world of the Vorpal Bunny is now within your grasp.

And there are several other D&D (and general role-playing) articles. Plus, for the real "space gamers" out there... William Barton reviews GDW's new edition of the classic *Triplanetary.*

–Steve Jackson

THE SPACE GAMER

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Where We're Going

This will be a short column. (I can hear the cheering already.) Things are proceeding very well, but nothing new and fascinating is happening, and I'm too busy getting ready for Origins to write much anyway. Besides, thsese darts keep going by and messing up my concentration . . .

Which ought to tell you that KILLER is in the final playtest. Right now I'm GM for a six-person scenario. Well, it *started* with six. Three of them bit the dust within twelve hours of starting time, and the other three are jumping at shadows. The rules are in next-to-final draft; we're still polishing up the scenarios and coming up with new and ingenious ways of slaughtering each other.

Game Design

The Game Design book is finished except for pasteup. It will be 48 pages long rather than 40; Nick and I got to add everything we wanted to. Feedback on the book has been excellent ever since we announced we were doing it, which is really gratifying. I don't think anyone will be disappointed.

Car Wars

This one is also finished except for pasteup – but pasteup of a multi-component game is harder than for a simple book. All the counters are finished, and the color separation has been made. The counters for CAR WARS are going to set a new standard – and not just for *small* games.

Undead (formerly "Vampire")

As you can see, we've had a name change on this project. Details next month, when space allows (these lines are being written long after deadline). The game itself is going well; the playtesters are enthusiastic, and it seems to be very easy to GM . . . the trouble is that people keep coming up with more things that Drac and the vampire hunters ought to be able to do. And somewhere in there, Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson got into the act . . . LATE FLASH. This one will now have *full-color* counters, too!

Other Projects

Paul Jaquays is working on the first set of *Cardboard Heroes* for TRAVELLER – more on those next issue. We're talking with a couple of different designers about possible games to go into TSG. Denis' next fantasy *Cardboard Heroes* are going to be Undead and Monsters, but he's barely gotten started – too many other projects. And the computer version of RAID ON IRAN looks more and more like it might really be here by fall.

For Subscribers Only

Starting next month, we're going to start putting an occasional "subscribers only" bonus on the mailer cover from time to time. Next month's goodie will be a glossy b&w reproduction (or two) of the CAR WARS counters. For those who are heavily into the game (and I predict there will be a lot) this will be a chance to add to your stable. (Garage?) If you don't like the van in blue, take this one and paint it red . . . Whatever.

– Steve Jackson

GAME MASTER

GAME MASTER exists to answer questions on your favorite games. If you have a rules question or play problem, send it in. Questions to be answered will be chosen on the basis of general interest. They will be first referred to the game publisher or designer. If no response is received, GAME MASTER will offer its own interpretation of the rule. Sorry – no individual replies are possible.

Ogre

1. Is there any limit to the number of missiles that an Ogre Mark V can launch in a single turn?

2. How does terrain effect both moving and nonmoving CPs?

3. Does a unit on a road get its defense increased on road hexes passing through towns and other terrain? If not, can the owning player specify whether the unit in a certain hex is on or off the road?

4. Can Ogres overrun other Ogres underwater? If so, are missiles still the only weapon types that can be used in the overrun combat?

5. Lastly, can infantry units cross the river bridge hex if the bridge is down?

Raja Thiagarajan
Gbarnga, Bong County, Liberia

*It looks as though **Ogre** is spreading everywhere . . .*
To answer your questions –

1. In the first edition, a rule limited the Ogre to firing only two missiles per turn. This limitation has not appeared in either the second or third editions. I have to admit the limitation was not realistic, so it might be best to forget it.

2. Terrain affects a mobile CP as though it were a MHWZ.

3. A unit traveling through a town (or forest) on the road gets the road benefit for movement AND the terrain benefit for defense.

4. Yes, and yes. Missiles only.

5. If the bridge is down, infantry treat that hex as "rubble." Thanks for mentioning this – we'll clear it up in the next edition.

Empires of the Middle Ages

I have several questions concerning SPI's *Empires of the Middle Ages.*

(1) Where is the Game-Turn Record Track?

(2a) Does a "diplomatic conquest" of an area of a different religion convert the area's religion to that of the attacker?

(2b) Can an area be converted by "diplomatic conquests" instead of regular attacks?

(3) Does a "diplomatic conquest" also give the "attacker" a claim to the area?

(4) If a Magnate appears in one of the Moslem-Spanish areas, is he Moslem or Roman Catholic? If Roman Catholic, does the area stay Roman Catholic when the Magnate dies (is deactivated), or does it become Moslem again?

(5) Do seagoing areas have to be connected overland to an area they want to colonize?

– David Barnes

(1) Our copy did not have a Game-Turn Record Track, and none was listed on the index of parts enclosed, even though one is mentioned in the rules. However, we found it simple to keep track of whose turn and which year it was, simply by memory.

(2a) No.

(2b) No.

(3) No.

(4) A Magnate is of the religion of his birthplace-area; the only exception occurs with special rules concerning the dreaded Syrian Magnate. So a Moslem-Spanish Magnate is Moslem.

(5) No, but areas too far from their ruling seat run perpetual risk of being in unrest.

NEXT ISSUE

TSG 42 will be a special Star Trek gaming issue, with an article on Star Trek computer gaming;

Official errata for Star Fleet Battles;

A Task Force '81 company report;

Also, "METAMORPHOSIS ALPHA Notebook" by W.G. Armintrout;

And more Non-human Race Contest Winners.

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Who Am I?

by Gary Gygax

Gary Gygax is co-designer of Dungeons & Dragons® and president of TSR Hobbies, Inc. He needs no other introduction. . . .

Having been a game enthusiast since I can remember, the thought of actually earning a living from games had fascinated me since my teens. Mixed up with toy soldiers and chessmen of my kindergarten days were tales of magic and knights slaying dragons. What better than to have it all in a single profession? By the time I was 12, I collected and played crude miniature wargames with 54mm scale models. Simultaneously, I read science fiction, fantasy, and chess texts. Perhaps, I thought, I could write a book on chess history and varieties of the game. In 1958 I bought *Gettysburg*, began playing as often as I could, and there went my chess game. Along with it went my desire to deal with its national variations and so on. Considering the number of excellent treatments on the subject, it is just as well that I discovered wargaming when I did. About this time I also discovered that there were actually rules for wargames using miniature figurines. New vistas opened for me. I threw myself into my new hobby. My wife threatened to throw my friends, my gaming equipment, even *me* out into the cold!

Despite hardships, I persisted in playing, knowing that someday all the fun could be rationalized somehow. Despite a lack of opponents, I persisted in trying to recruit unsuspecting friends and acquaintences (or even strangers) to the ranks of the gaming hobby. Despite public opinion, which generally held wargames to be odd, gamers to be even odder, I persisted in flaunting my aberrant behavior – boardgames and miniatures were proudly displayed in my home, used in public places. I sent away for blank hex sheets from Avalon Hill in 1961 or thereabouts. Perhaps I could design my own boardgames. In 1965 Don Kaye and I made some half-hearted attempts to formalize and polish the rules we used to fight World War II battle games with 54mm figures and vehicle models. About this same time I became deeply involved in postal gaming and the attendant portion of the hobby. Soon I was in the International Federation of Wargaming.

The old IFW was lots of fun because it gave you a chance to correspond with gamers across North America, to engage in PBM games with them, and to exchange ideas. There was an active amateur hobby press then, and IFW began regular publication of a magazine for all members, while special interest groups within IFW published at least half a dozen smaller-circulation journals dealing with specific periods of history or game interests. I organized and ran the first gaming convention of its kind in this country in 1969, the GenCon® (I) convention. It was inspired by a gathering of a dozen or so gamers at my house the year before. When I told Bill Speer and Scott Duncan about the fun we had and suggested that it would be nice to have

a formal gathering for all IFW members, they agreed heartily and told me to go ahead. While that wasn't quite what I had planned, I did so anyway. We had about 100 people at the one-day convention. Gamers from both the East and West Coasts were there, as were hobbyists from Texas and Canada. Playing wargames was uncommon in those days, and all of us would travel long distances to have a chance to be with so many others with the same interest. Shortly after this we organized a local group, the Lake Geneva Tactical Studies Association. Its membership included Rob Kuntz, Jeff Perren, Mike Reese, and Leon Tucker. Many a happy day was spent in my basement playing miniatures on the sand table there.

That was all well and good as far as I was concerned – although my wife still didn't exactly love the hobby. Something was still lacking, though. Daily routines kept me from playing games as often as I would wish. There was a long ride to and from work five days each week. Then there was my job as a supervising underwriter at an insurance company in Chicago. Even though I would often meet with Leon Tucker, Terry Stafford, and other gamers during (protracted) lunch hours, the demands of my work took a lot away from my hobby. In short, I still had a burning desire to become a full-time game hobbyist, but I couldn't quite manage to figure out a way to make an avocation into a vocation. Then Guidon Games came into existence.

Don Lowry had his mail order hobby supply operation running in 1969, I believe. He talked to me about becoming his editor in 1970. He would be happy to publish games and rules done by me, authored by those I knew or whatever I could find. He had seen some of my early work in the hobby press, and he thought we could do well together. I was flattered, delighted! Here was my chance to become a professional gamer! All interest in the insurance industry was lost, and, not surprisingly, so was my job by the end of the year. Who cared? Not me, certainly, on a honeymoon with a career which I thought would soon blossom. It would also leave me plenty of time to write fantasy and science fiction stories free-lance. I had it made! Or did I? The Guidon Games business was doing fairly well, but the royalties and editorial fees were hardly sufficient to support one person, let alone a wife and five children. The story submissions got me plenty of rejection slips – and it is just as well that some never got a reading. The game enterprise then began to slip; undercapitalization and lack of business acumen were the likely causes in my opinion. The shoe repair business I had started to hold body and you-know-what together now loomed large. Would I now have to look upon *this* as a lifetime trade rather than as something to tide the family over until gaming became more lucrative?

Thanks to Don Kaye, the answer was NO! Don cashed in a life insurance policy, and with the $1,000 it produced, we formed Tactical Studies Rules. In October of 1973 we published *Cavaliers & Roundheads,* a set of military miniatures rules for the English Civil War. Brian Blume joined us as an equal partner in January of 1974 and the *Dungeons & Dragons®* fantasy game rules were published that very month. Don, Brian, and I would often discuss when we could begin actually earning money from the enterprise. We all worked for no pay of any sort, doing collation, packaging, shipping, bookkeeping, etc., in our spare time evenings and weekends. Nights, Brian drove home to work on his game designs, I did mine, and Don worked a second job as a private policeman. Don especially looked forward to the time he could work for Tactical Studies Rules and have some time for game design. I was pretty happy, despite having to spend time fixing heels and making sandals. There was enough time to do a fair amount of design and writing. Weekends

were for play-testing, or just playing various games.

When Don died suddenly in January of 1975, Brian Blume and I were at a loss. We tried to manage with the partnership for several months, moving the operation to a portion of my basement. The sales activity was expanding, we had many new releases planned, and so on. The demands placed upon us were so great that we scarcely had time to play games anymore. We worked, wrote, edited, shipped, and accounted. In June of that year, I worked full-time for the partnership. Brian came a few weeks later and worked full-time also, but he took no salary for several months, deeming things too close to allow any more payroll expense beyond my princely $80 per week. That August, we formed TSR Hobbies, Inc., and shortly thereafter the corporation purchased all of the assets and liabilities of the partnership. The history of TSR Hobbies, Inc. is common knowledge, so I won't bother to detail that any further.

But where was I? Nominally, I was the chief executive officer of the corporation. My duties included everything from janitor to salesman. It was becoming harder and harder to find time to design *and* play games. I became very selective in what I played, for there was so much writing and designing to do. In 1976 came an identity crisis. Was I a game *player* or was I a writer/designer? There wasn't much debate, really.

TSR Hobbies, Inc. furnished my livelihood, so it had to come first. What had started as an avocation had become a vocation with a vengeance! Occasional game play could be eked out, but almost all of my time had to be spent administering to company affairs or doing writing and design. The job I had thought would allow me to spend most of my time playing games had turned into a profession which allowed far less time for gaming! Was I disturbed about this? Perhaps a bit at first, but after all, I was working with games and related business. Soon I found that I enjoyed writing, and that designing games was more fun than playing them – at least most of the time. Besides, in a year or two things would settle down sufficiently to allow more free time for gaming. Wouldn't they? Fellow hobbyists were often surprised to learn that I had so few hours for actual game play each week. They seemed to think a 60-70 hour week was excessive time to put in on the job. I didn't bother to argue – not enough time for that.

The corporation grew by leaps and bounds. We began to hire design people and to get more and more outside submissions. Soon the company would be so well organized and efficiently run that I could serve mostly as an advisor and game tester, and possibly I would do some actual game designing of the serious sort in a year or two. Meanwhile, we had marketing strategy to plan, sales approaches, financial planning to do, and wasn't the U.K. ripe for us to expand into? In fiscal 1980, TSR Hobbies, Inc. topped eight million dollars gross sales volume. The rate seems to be holding, so managing the corporation becomes more complex and challenging by the month.

Thus, just a few weeks ago, I once again faced an identity crisis. The demands of the corporation preclude being its chief executive officer and a designer/writer at the same time. Was I an executive, or did I wish to return to the creative end?

Now the latter thought was particularly tempting. Not only are there games and playing aids to do, but publishers are willing to read my manuscripts now, and I do enjoy writing adventure yarns in the heroic fantasy genre. After some ser-

ious contemplation, I opted to remain as an executive. The choice was not easy, and I hope I do not regret it in the time ahead. The matter is simply one of commitment and responsibility. TSR Hobbies, Inc. is still in the throes of rapid growth, and as one of its founders and shapers, I must remain to contribute whatever I can as long as my direction and administration continues to benefit the firm. There are over 100 persons in the organization, and as the chief executive officer, it is up to me to see that TSR continues to be able to employ them and the dozens and dozens of others who will join the corporation during the next year or so. Many of our staff are game hobbyists, of course, and I certainly can't let them down!

Besides all that, business is a fun game, too! There are as many opportunities in business as there are playing a game against a novice.

Now I am actually playing more games than I am writing or designing. I get in about one session every week. After 50 or 60 hours of administrative and executive duties, I do a few hours of writing (such as this article) and then sit down to game for about twice as much time. Not bad. If the identity crisis was trying, the end result wasn't bad at all. Did I say that about the crisis between professional gamer and game hobbyist? Yes. I never regretted the decision either.

From the way things are shaping up, I won't be sorry in the least that I chose to be a businessman rather than designer and writer either. After all, it is not impossible that in a few years I will have contributed just about everything I can to the corporation as its chief executive. Then I can move from that occupation back to designing and writing. Then I'll be an ex-businessman who left a large corporation to strike out as a free-lance author who founded his own business which became large enough to leave to become a free-lance author so that eventually I can have plenty of free time to play games. Got that?

Gentle reader, if you contemplate a career in the adventure gaming industry, stand not on the threshold trembling. Step forth boldly. At worst, it's a job. At its best, it can be like the best of games. In fact, if you approach the industry with gaming in mind, you will be ahead. You won't necessarily have time to play games or design them or even read them – unless you get into that portion of the business. Game principles and the spirit which motivates you to be a game hobbyist will certainly stand you in good stead. The logic and reasoning, planning and negotiation, learning and dedication which come from game playing can be of immeasurable help in business. Consider how many small gaming enterprises there are. Think of how relatively few fail. Quite a number seem to be growing and developing into secure enterprises. The organizers and managers of these firms are gamers using gaming skills applied to business, whether they realize it or not. Could a member of the U.S. State Department play *Diplomacy*? Could a skilled game player use his diplomatic skills in business negotiations? The ramifications of this theory could be startling to the business community. Let's not mention it outside the hobby.

In all seriousness, even if one's exact identity can be in question from time to time, the adventure game business is the place I love to be. It gives me a good, if often changing, self-image. It encourages making dreams into realities. It's all a big game, and about the best I've ever played; but as a dedicated hobbyist, I'm always ready to try a new one.

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Tips for Thieves

By Richard Meyer

A key argument the adventure gaming industry uses to attract new converts is to emphasize that each player in FRP has the freedom and flexibility, within the basic restrictions of the rules system being used, to set up the character that best suits his or her gaming personality. But the manner in which a GM's adventures are structured often eliminates much of this flexibility, and limits the player to a very small number of role-playing options.

Nowhere is this phenomenon more common than in the case of fantasy thieves. All too often, a thief character finds himself with only three real career alternatives:

1) Go dungeon delving with a large party of adventures. Whenever fighting occurs, remain in the middle of the party, protecting the magic users. If the party is victorious, step to the front to detrap and/or unlock any treasure chests found. Repeat until dead, or until 10th level is reached.

2) Because no other victims are readily available, practice thieving skills on members of one's own party. Try to ignore the fact that the thief-character has become as popular in the campaign as an outbreak of the plague. Use ill-gotten gains to buy protection from the inevitable attempts at retaliation.

3) Find, in the course of adventuring, sufficient enchanted vorpal blades, rings of Haste, and potions of Giant Strength to enable one to fight with the efficiency of the XIVth Panzer Division. Begin slaying balrogs single-handed in one's spare time, in order to "steal" their treasure.

All of these views of thieves are extremely restrictive, and highly distorted. The first approach is common and particularly sad, for it takes a character who supposedly lives by his wits and reduces him/her to a die-rolling automaton. At the other extreme (3), the thief completely forsakes his unique perspective, and becomes just another fighter, using artificially enhanced abilities to compensate for the lack of strength and endurance that led him to become a thief in the first place.

For the last year, our company (Gamelords) has been producing a line of gaming aids designed to change this perspective, and to provide thieves with some genuine adventuring and role-playing alternatives. Based on those experiences, this article offers three basic strategies that GMs can use to expand the role of thieves in their campaigns.

Design Appropriate Adventures

Although the skills of a thief are a vital addition to underground adventuring parties, it is equally true that thieves should not spend the bulk of their gaming careers in dungeon-type situations. The treasures in dungeons are usually amply guarded by treacherous traps and monstrous protectors. If there are valuables to be pilfered in the boudoirs and drawing rooms of private dwellings, why would a thief choose to go ten rounds with the balrog in the basement? Moreover, a dungeon's terrain is by its very nature an unknown terrain, filled with the unexpected; thieves would logically prefer situations where more complete information can be obtained by "casing" the scene of the crime beforehand.

Strategy one, therefore, makes it incumbent on the GM to provide thieving opportunities other than dungeon adventures. Towns and cities are excellent locales for crime. A GM can allow player-thieves great freedom in selecting their targets by designing a few generalized floor plans that can be used to represent the layout of a random shop or residence. Once the target is chosen, the GM must develop enough descriptive detail on the major NPCs involved (when they are present at work or home, whether other employees or live-in servants are regularly on the premises, what kinds of precautions they have taken against crime) so that he can readily answer the thief's questions when the latter attempts to reconnoiter the area.

A GM can also provide a good change of pace for a mixed group of thieves and other adventurers by developing a highway robbery scenario. The GM generates a terrain map of a particular stretch of roadway, and then devises a schedule of traffic (in the form of traveling parties and random encounters) passing through the area on a given day. The players are then turned loose to set up ambushes or traps, and to make their decisions on which encounters to attack, and which to avoid. In designing the encounters, the GM should take account of the combined abilities of the highwaymen, and prepare a mix of very weak, evenly matched, and completely overpowering foes. Highwayman adventures provide players with an opportunity to use their common sense and tactical planning abilities to supplement their basic combat strength. We have found them to be exceptionally popular adventures for parties tired of totally random wilderness encounters.

Encourage and Reward Good Role-Playing

In the real world, people do not become thieves simply because they have high dexterities, and decide they don't have the stats to be great fighters or wizards. The criminal sub-culture teems with a peculiar breed of individuals who find in underworld activities the satisfaction and monetary rewards missing in their everyday existences, or exorcism for the private demons in their souls. Encourage your players to develop realistic individual personalities for their characters, complete with quirks and neuroses, by awarding EP for appropriate, in-character actions that might otherwise be ignored as too risky to a party's safety. Reward that man with the deep-seated hatred of the high and mighty for stopping in the midst of his getaway to deface a family portrait, and your players will start to get inside

the criminal mystique.

Similarly, the GM may want to restructure the way in which character advancement is translated into improvements in thiefly skills. A cutpurse practices a far different trade from a second-story burglar; muggers and safecrackers are not interchangeable party members. If a thief gains experience primarily by picking locks and detecting traps, it seems inappropriate to assume that his pickpocketing skills increase at an equal rate. An approach like that used in *RuneQuest* (where individual skills are separately improved either through training or their successful use) might be used to reflect a thief's choice of specialties; this choice then becomes an important role-playing decision for each individual player.

Most importantly, both the GM and players should take the effort to give each criminal endeavor a unique life of its own. Don't permit a player in a tavern to say "I'm going to pick X's pocket," and then simply make a die roll to determine the outcome. Make the player describe the technique he's using to get close to his victim, and determine if there are reactions to his efforts on the part of NPCs in the vicinity. On the GM's part, this means that circumstances must be described in detail, so that the player understands his available options.

Provide a Longer Term Perspective

A criminal adventure is far from ended with its commission and a thief's escape. If goods other than coins and gems were stolen, they must converted into cash. If prisoners or hostages were taken, there is a possibility that they can be ransomed, though this is risky business. Finally, there may have been witnesses – seen or unseen – to the crime. The net of justice may be closing around the thief without his knowledge, unless the player is careful enough to ask the GM the right questions, or alert enough to notice that suspicious-looking fellow following him.

By expanding the focus of the thief's activities, additional opportunities for exciting and offbeat adventures are generated. Perhaps the fence may cleverly attempt to substitute a fake for a piece of purloined jewelry, or call his bully boys from the back room to try to seize it. The bearer of the ransom note may be detained and tortured – or the thieves may be forced to frantically search the city to find and silence a witness! Any of these moments can develop into gripping mini-scenarios, with the freedom of the thieves hanging in the balance, and very little additional preparation required from the GM.

Over the still longer term, players may aspire to become criminal masterminds, directing the activities of a far-flung underworld empire. To this end, the GM may wish to develop a guild structure for the player's home city. Player-thieves may be required to join the Thieves' Guild in order to continue thieving without harassment. Once members, they may be drafted by the Guild leaders to participate in a certain adventure, or may use the power of the Guild to locate hirelings, influence judicial proceedings, etc. As the thief advances in stature, he may become privy to the innermost councils of the Guild, and begin to gain control of power for himself. In this way, thieves can develop long-term objectives other than simply amassing the largest hoard of gold imaginable, and can gain an influence similar to that accorded high level fighters and mages.

Playing a stealthy, skulking bad guy can be a great alternative for gamers who don't always enjoy pure hack-and-slash swashbuckling, or don't wish to dabble in the realm of the arcane. We hope these suggestions can help you eliminate the treatment of thieves as a second-rate, uninteresting character class, and give direction and depth to your campaigns.

Richard Meyer is president of Gamelords, Ltd., and creator of the game Thieves' Guild.

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Alternate Races for D&D

by Aaron Allston and Forrest Johnson

D&D is a vastly popular game, but the player character races come almost solely from Tolkien. While few DMs would like to see a player-character black pudding in their campaigns, many would prefer a little more variety than currently available.

The following races have been adapted as closely as possible from the *AD&D Monster Manual.* Many other races are possible.

Centaurs

In Greek mythology, the typical centaur was a pretty revolting character. He swilled wine, stole women and often ended his career spitted on a hero's sword. But there were others – for example, Chiron, Theseus' tutor – who were more restrained.

Centaurs can advance to the 10th level as fighters or rangers (11th with ST 17, 12th with ST 18). They can reach the 8th level as druids. Centaurs can attack once a turn with a weapon, or rear and kick for two attacks at 1d6 each. Armor class is 5, or 4 with a shield. Centaurs do not wear armor.

A centaur speaks Common, his own language and an alignment language. He can learn other languages by the usual means. He moves 18" and can carry burdens like a medium horse. Regardless of class, a centaur starts with two 8-sided hit dice and gains one per level above the first.

Centaurs may be of any alignment, but the *Monster Manual*'s neutral-chaotic good is a safe range. As player characters, they tend to be boistrous, bluff and tactless – never let one handle negotiations. They have trouble navigating dungeons. Tavernkeepers allow them only in the stables. Courage and generosity are centaur virtues; impatience and recklessness are the corresponding faults.

Gargoyles

Traditional gargoyles are useless things – chaotic evil, unintelligent, immune to normal weapons, etc. Better leave them sitting on cathedrals. For player characters, one must assume an ancestral race of similar appearance, but brighter and friendlier, and vulnerable to non-magical attacks.

Gargoyles can advance to the 8th level as either assassins or fighters. (If the latter, they can advance to the ninth level with ST 17, 10th with ST 18.) Their claws prevent the use of human weapons, but they can strike twice per round (at 1d3). Grappling, they can attack once with jaws (1d4) and once with horn (1d6). They do not grapple foes who are much larger than themselves. Gargoyle assassins can backstab with one claw attack only. They have no ability to open locks, remove traps or pickpocket. Gargoyles are AC5 and do not use armor or shields.

Gargoyles speak Common, their own language and an alignment language. They may learn other languages by the usual means. Like their nastier cousins, ancestral gargoyles move 9" on the ground, or 15" flying. They have the hit dice appropriate to their class and rank.

Gargoyles tend towards chaos, that is, they are chaotic good, chaotic neutral, or chaotic evil. Actually, "peculiar" might be more descriptive than "chaotic;" gargoyle behavior seems quite bizarre to humans. Gargoyles spend their leisure hours crouched and immobile on a convenient perch – a high cliff, building or tree. They do not sleep, but fall into a melancholy brooding. In this state, it is dangerous to disturb them – they will attack anything that breaks their concentration. (This makes them excellent guards.) A gargoyle's mind moves in strange paths. He may suddenly pounce on a rock or tree stump, claiming it insulted him, or chat with a puzzled Komodo dragon, interpreting its movements as attempts to communicate.

Half Giants

These are the offspring of indiscriminate female giants. Though stunted by giant standards, they stand about 8' tall and seem quite powerful to humans.

Half giants can advance to the 12th level as fighters, or the 6th as MUs. Double classing is possible; the usual restrictions apply. Half giants can use any armor or weapons, but treat short swords as daggers and two-handed weapons (except pole arms and missile weapons) as one-handed. If a half giant has metal armor, it must be custom made, probably at great expense. Unarmored, he is only AC9.

Half giants speak Common, their alignment language and one giant language for every intelligence point above 10. They move 12"; in metal armor, 10." Regardless of class, they start with two 10-sided dice, and gain one per level above the first.

Half giants may be of any alignment. In general, they tend to be moody and condescending towards smaller folk. They are uncompromising people, apt to solve problems by brute force.

Leprechauns

If you like practical jokes, and can manage an Irish brogue, you are probably qualified to play a leprechaun. These mischievous creatures cause almost as many problems for their friends as their enemies, but they have many talents, and may add humor to an otherwise dull adventure.

Leprechauns can advance without limit as illusionists, to the 10th level as MUs, or to the 8th as thieves. Double classing is possible (as illusionist/thief or MU/thief); the usual restrictions apply. As thieves, leprechauns enjoy the same bonuses as halflings. Regardless of class, they are AC9 (plus dexterity adjustments) and may not use armor. They use no weapons but daggers and small shillelaghs (which do 2-5 points damage, mostly to shins and kneecaps).

Leprechauns speak Common, their own language and an alignment language. They may learn additional languages by the usual means. They move 15". Regardless of class, they start with 1d4 hit points, and gain 1d4 for each level above the first. Player character leprechauns are not immune to magic, but do have +4 saving rolls versus magic. Because of their sharp ears they can be surprised only on a roll of 1 on a 10-sided die. In general, class abilities replace the racial abilities in the *Monster Manual.*

Leprechauns are invariably chaotic

good. They stand about 2' tall; the shorter the leprechaun, the bigger his ego. They love gold, and behave like magpies generally. Their jokes are endless – one might Change Self to pose as a silly-looking crest on a fighter's helm, or conjure an illusory chair for someone to sit on. Leprechauns are less than fearless, and rarely hang around when their side is obviously losing.

Lizard Men

These play best if you happen to speak with a lisp; after a few hours of playing a lizard man, you will probably end up speaking with a lisp anyway! If that doesn't bother you, these scaly people can be great fun.

Lizard men can advance to the 10th level as fighters (11 with ST 17, 12th with ST 18), or to the 2nd as MUs. Double-classing is possible; the usual restrictions apply. Lizard men can use weapons, or else attack with two claws (1-2 points damage each) or bite (1-8 points). They are AC5, or AC4 with shields. They do not use armor.

Lizard men speak Common, their own language and an alignment language. They can learn additional languages by the usual means. They move 6" on land, 12" in the water. Regardless of class, lizard men start with two 8-sided hit dice, and gain one per level above the first.

Lizard men are always neutral (neutral good, absolute neutral or neutral evil). They stand up to 7' tall and tend to stand out in a crowd. They are unpopular in most places; fortunately they are not easily angered. In temperament, lizard men resemble alligators – slothful, but ferocious when aroused. They are not very careful about what they eat. A lizard man character might roll for reaction every time the party kills something; if it looks good, he'll probably eat it.

Ability	Centaurs	Half-Giants	Gargoyles	Leprechauns	Lizard Men
ST					
min.	13	17	8	3	13
max.	18	18	18	8	18
IN					
min.	3	3	3	11	3
max.	16	16	14	18	14
WI					
min.	3	3	3	3	3
max.	16	16	12	12	14
DX					
min.	3	3	3	11	3
max.	16	14	16	18	14
CN					
min.	13	15	3	3	13
max.	18	18	18	14	18
CH					
min.	3	3	3	6	3
max.	16	16	8	18	8
Alignment:	Any	Any	CG, CN, CE	CG	NG, NN, NE
Class:	Fighter Druid Ranger	Fighter Magic-user F/MU	Fighter Assassin	Magic-user Illusionist Thief MU/T I/T	Fighter Magic-user F/MU

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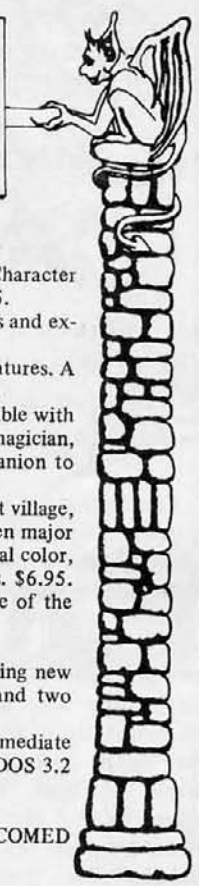

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DEALER INQUIRIES WELCOMED

Nonhuman Races

These are second-place winners from the Non-human Race Contest (TSG 40). Other winners will appear in the next few issues.

Sea Geamus

Frequency: Moderately Common
No. Appearing: 6-60
Armor Class: 8
Move: 4" on land, 12" in water
Hit Dice: 2d6
% in Lair: 40%
Treasure Type: B
No. Attacks: 1
Damage/Attack: 1-10 points
Special Attacks/Defenses: None
Magic Resistance: Standard
Intelligence: Average
Alignment: Lawful Evil
Size: S
Psionics: Nil

Description: Sea Geamii appear in a wide variety of colors, ranging anywhere from a charcoal grey to dark brown. They have big, flat hands with a thumb and two webbed fingers, and big, flappy feet with one big toe and a strong muscle in place of the other four toes. They use their hands and feet to propel them at great speeds through the water, but they are considerably slower on land. The fin-like flaps on either side of their heads serve no apparent purpose. Sea Geamii have leathery, seal-like skin. Some species located in arctic regions may have a thin coat of silky hair covering their entire body to provide limited protection from the icy winds. Colder habitats produce thicker coats.

Eating Habits: A Sea Geamus' normal diet consists mainly of fish and seaweed or algae. They will eat no meat other than fish. Some have been known to enjoy strong drink.

General: Sea Geamii are normally very hostile, but they will seldom fight if they are outnumbered by foes larger than themselves. Sea Geamii live in very close-knit tribes all their lives. Many times, tribe chieftains are those who have some unique physical trait (larger than average, light skinned or albino, etc.), but more often, tribes select a fierce warrior to guide them. The semi-nomadic tribes roam mostly in coastal areas or near large bodies of water. They spend most of their time playing or hunting under the surface. Sea Geamii are mammals and are capable of holding their breath for extended periods of time (15-20 minutes) before coming up for air. The name Sea Geamii was given these vicious little creatures by humans ages ago, but the name Urthryne is still held sacred among them as their true name. They speak the Urthryne language alone, but are capable of learning other languages. No matter how well they understand a foreign language, they will never *speak* a language other than their own native tongue.

Habitat: Sea Geamii will normally be found in caves near the sea coast or in very dense tropical rain forests near a lake or large spring.

–Gavin Gossett

The Droo

Frequency: Uncommon
No. Appearing: 3-30
Armor Class: 5
Move: 15"
Hit Dice: 4+3
% in Lair: 25%
Treasure Type: M (individual), G, Z
No. Attacks: 2
Damage/Attack: 3-18 or by weapon type
Special Attacks: See below
Special Defenses: See below
Magic Resistance: Standard
Intelligence: Very to Highly
Alignment: Neutral (tends toward Chaos)
Size: L (7½+')
Psionic Ability: Nil

The Droo live mainly in the forests of northeastern Lambdenia (my campaign world), but they have been sighted in other forest areas. Because they live in heavily wooded areas the Droo are never without their special double-bladed, two-handed axes (which are +2 in their hands only). The Droo also employ throwing axes.

The Droo also possess some Druid abilities. They can Pass Without Trace and Speak With Animals at will. They can also Call Woodland Beings and Commune With Nature as 10th level Druids.

Great hostility exists between the Droo and treants. There was a great war between the two races. It lasted almost 250 years and ended with the Droo taking shelter in the northeastern forests and rarely venturing out. Whenever a Droo encounters a treant he goes into a berserker bloodlust (saplust?) and gets an extra attack per round. Treants fight at +2 against Droo.

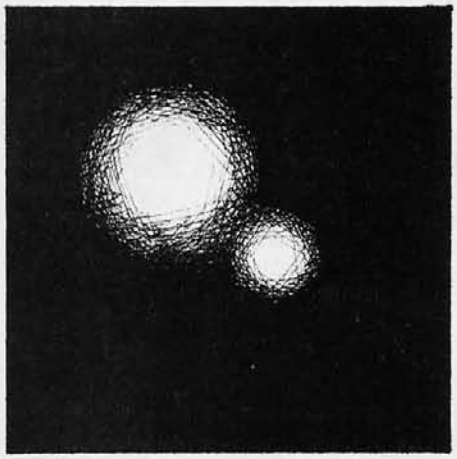
The Droo only eat trees. They harm no other plant life. They also engage in an extensive tree conservation program to insure their food supply.

The Droo are 7½+' tall. They are roughly humanoid shaped, although extremely ugly. They are covered by a

moss-like hair that is highly flammable (fire does double damage).

Possible racial bonuses for Droo P.C.
Strength +1
Dexterity +1
Charisma -3
Maximum Age 300 years

–Alan Pool



Ballies

Frequency: Rare
Number Appearing: 1-6
Armor Class: -8
Move: 10" (usually much slower)
Hit Dice: 9
% in Lair: 0
No. Attacks: 1
Damage/Attack: 4d6
Special Attacks: None
Special Defenses: See below
Magic Resistance: See below
Intelligence: High
Alignment: Indifferent
Size: S
Psionic Ability: Nil

Description: Ballies are 6-12 inch spheres of glowing energy. Commonly mistaken for will-o-wisps, ballies are creatures of the light and feed on natural energy rather than life force. Ballie movement is a slow float, although they are capable of very rapid travel. They prefer open areas, to better gather sunlight, and at night hibernate similarly to the way hummingbirds do. They try to avoid darkness except during thunderstorms – when, occasionally, they will go into a mating frenzy.

Some magic spells have no effect on ballies, such as growth and diminish. Cold and darkness spells do damage; while fire spells restore one hit point per die. Lightning affects as a Bless spell.

Ballies cannot be damaged by non-magical weapons. Any hit with a metal weapon will do 2-12 points electrical damage to the attacker.

–James W. Kelley

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DM Don'ts

by Lewis Pulsipher

There is no place in D&D DMing for inconsistency or sadism, and most of the disgusting DM practices one encounters are direct results of one or the other. D&D is a game as well as an adventure, and as in any competitive situation everyone, including the referee, should "play fair" and abide by the rules, written and unwritten. No one likes an opponent who gloats and openly enjoys the suffering of his enemy, especially not one who can completely control what happens if he wishes! Here are some specific examples.

Delusions of infallibility/godhood. No DM, no matter how experienced, is infallible. For that matter, anyone who has been under continuous mental strain for several hours, as a DM finds himself in the middle of an adventure, can expect to make mistakes. Unfortunately some DMs refuse to recognize this, and go so far as to stand on any ruling once made, no matter how ridiculous. Perhaps his misguided idea is that he must maintain the facade of infallibility the way a football referee does. But the situations are quite different: D&D is far more complex than football, and compared to a sport the rules are flexible and uncertain.

Consequently, when a player questions a ruling the DM should at least listen to the reasons. He should not be afraid to change his mind if logic demands it. It is more important for players to think the DM is fair than to think he never errs. And players should realize that no DM plays exactly according to the written rules. If you are unfortunate enough to encounter a player who will not quit arguing, disrupting the game, don't play with him again. Such people are rare – much less common than deluded DMs.

Once a DM has decided to rule one way about a situation, he should consistently follow the ruling until new evidence or arguments are presented. A DM who changes his mind again and again depending on which arguments were most recently repeated to him is hopeless. Only new reasons should change one's mind, in D&D or any other game.

Anticipating and then manipulating. When designing a place of adventure some DMs try to anticipate what players will do when they reach an area. Quite often they fail; the players have some magic item or devise some strategy the DM didn't consider. The DM has already made one mistake by anticipating, but now he may make a worse one by changing the situation to block the players once more, forcing them to do what he intended in the first place. Not only is this unfair, it implies a general attitude which is very "anti-game." The DM apparently is more interested in offering a certain level of resistance to the players no matter how well they play, so that even the most brilliant party is destined to lose characters because the DM will make sure they do. It also implies that the DM intends to control the course of the game rather than give the players a chance to do so. A better attitude is to set up situations which seem believable – something which might actually happen given the D&D world parameters rather than something contrived to present specific problems to specific parties – and assume that the players will get through without casualties. You can't go wrong then, and there's no temptation to manipulate a situation. Of course, this doesn't mean they will actually do so well, it's just wise to assume that they might.

(On the other hand, some players, perhaps more often the passive types or those who don't play wargames, *want* the DM to manipulate the game in order to make the "story" more entertaining. If this is the intent of players and DM, fine.)

Shift from "slow-time" to "real-time." This usually occurs when a DM more interested in killing people than in being impartial sees a chance to clobber someone with a monster or situation just encountered. Although earlier he has permitted players plenty of time to consider alternative courses of action, in his eagerness to kill someone he now requires rapid-fire decisions as though the players really faced the monster. Even if the players would normally be quick enough to react in time, they are slow in this case because they've become accustomed to a leisurely pace. Sometimes the DM won't even indicate that he's switched to real-time until it's too late for the players to do *any*thing. A DM should pick slow time or real time and stick to it consistently.

Shifting from joking atmosphere to anything-you-say-you-do. This resembles the time shift above. The DM usually (and wisely) allows players to joke about what they might say or might do – but don't really want to do. Most of the time it's clear that they're joking. If not, the DM asks the player to clarify his intentions. But in a dangerous situation the DM sometimes switches to the harsh, grim, straightjacketing policy that anything a player says, or says he does, takes place in the game, whether intended as joke or not. If he doesn't let the players know beforehand of the switch, they can easily get into serious trouble with a "joke." Even if the players are advised of the change, habit can cause problems. Whatever policy he chooses, the DM ought to apply it consistently for his own good as well as for the good of the game.

There are worse sins, for example the DM who is out to get one character or player, either because the DM erred by giving the character overpowerful magic, or because he wants revenge on the player for some reason not necessarily a part of the game. A character might by his own actions create a vendetta with non-player characters in the game, but this is between character and NPC, not character or player and DM. The DM should not make characters pay for his own mistakes, nor should he allow considerations outside the immediate game to affect his judgment.

Virtually all reprehensible DMing habits result from a failure to be impartial and consistent – from a failure to accept responsibility. A DM who thinks of monsters and NPCs as extensions of himself rather than separate constructs naturally cannot be a top rank DM, nor can one who changes his interpretations and methods from week to week, nor one who DMs for an ego trip. The object is to entertain and challenge the players, not to enjoy oneself at the expense of others.

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Deus Ex Machina

Interactive Fiction

This month we have a guest column on ***Interactive Fiction*** *by Dave Albert, editor of* ***SoftSide*** *magazine. Reprinted courtesy of that magazine.*

The advertising line is enough to make even the most determined novelist shudder and quake: "A new artistic medium," or "Take part in a story instead of merely reading it!" Well, don't worry, it's pure hype. *Interactive Fiction* is an interesting diversion, but hardly a new art form.

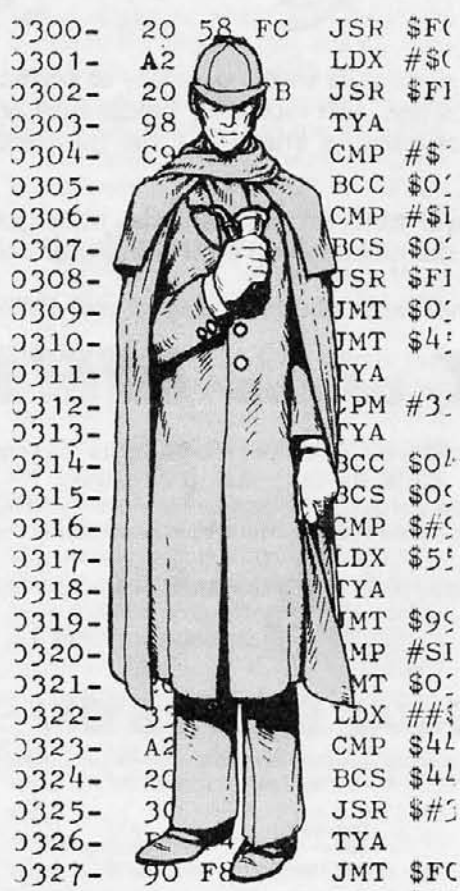
Perhaps the best one-line description of *Interactive Fiction* by Robert Lafore of Adventure International would be to call it a sub-genre of adventure games. You, the player, are presented with the text of a story. At certain points within that text you are asked to make decisions. Depending upon the decision you make, the story line develops differently. In some cases, the decisions you make don't affect anything at all, at other times the decisions you render are crucial to how the story unfolds.

The way it works is simple: The program asks your name and sex and then plugs you into the story as the main character. You read about yourself and the other characters until the moment arrives and you are prompted to give a response. Once you give that response, your character is irrevocably committed to one set of options. Had you given a different answer, the options would in turn be different. The stories themselves come equipped both with happy or sad endings, your choices will determine your final destiny.

While the concept is a sound one, *Interactive Fiction* has some problems in the execution of its expressed aims. In order to consider these, it may be best to look at the four programs currently on the market. They are: *Six Micro Stories, Two Heads of the Coin, Local Call for Death,* and *His Majesty's Ship "Impetuous."*

Six Micro Stories may be the best of the lot for a number of reasons. It consists of six very short stories that have two or three possible endings each . . . (except for one of them). Each story, with its possible alternative endings, is tight and to the point. There is little in any of these stories that is superfluous, and the player can understand the consequences of decisions immediately. The drawback, of course, is that each story is over before one is really sure that it has started. But on the whole, *Six Micro Stories* is quite satisfying and leaves one thirsting for more.

Two Heads of the Coin and *Local Call for Death* are longer pieces. Both are structured loosely along the lines of mystery/detective stories, with a heavy debt to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and his immortal Sherlock Holmes. In both cases, the player is called upon to solve a mystery. Once accomplished, there is little to hold the reader's interest. In the case of *Local Call for Death*, the reader is challenged not only to solve the puzzle, but also to list enough evidence to convict a criminal in court. This device extends the life of the program considerably, as opposed to *Two Heads of the Coin*, where the reader is abandoned virtually as soon as he has solved the puzzle, even if he does so by a lucky guess! Yet both programs are a lot of fun to tackle. The mysteries are well-conceived and the clues to the solution are deftly hidden within the text. Once you have figured out whodunnit, you can still play for hours with the lines of questioning and the ways of arriving at the inescapable conclusion.



His Majesty's Ship "Impetuous" is considerably more ambitious. Here Lafore has tried to write an open-ended story with several possible endings, and he has tried to structure it so that the reader/player is unaware of the import of his own decisions. Where in previous stories the player is allowed to ask any question that comes to mind (with often incongruous and confusing results), in *"Impetuous"* he is presented with yes or no decisions. There is no way to work around this structure, and it is greatly to the benefit of the program that such is the case. There is no puzzle to solve, only a story to develop. The end goal is to survive and decisions that you make will dictate whether you do or not. However, you cannot decipher what is the proper course of action that will guarantee your success. There are enough critical points (decisions) in the program to make the reader uncertain of the result of his actions after several games. This greatly enhances the value of the program.

What is perhaps the most interesting aspect of *Interactive Fiction* is watching it develop through the series. Lafore obviously is learning each time around. The programs are getting better and better. His technique improves each time, or at least it does in the eyes of this reader. *Six Micro Stories* and *"Impetuous"* have the longest replay time, and if their structure is pursued, the next couple of programs should begin to approach an adventure in terms of playing time.

But please, let's not make undue claims. *Interactive Fiction* is good software; it entertains and edifies. It is not anything close to a novel or a good short story, nor should it purport to be. If you are looking for something different in a game, something that is good fun and novel in its approach, try *Interactive Fiction*. You won't be disappointed. Just don't expect Flaubert, James or Twain.

***Interactive Fiction** is available for the TRS-80, 32K. Prices range from $14.95 to $19.95.*

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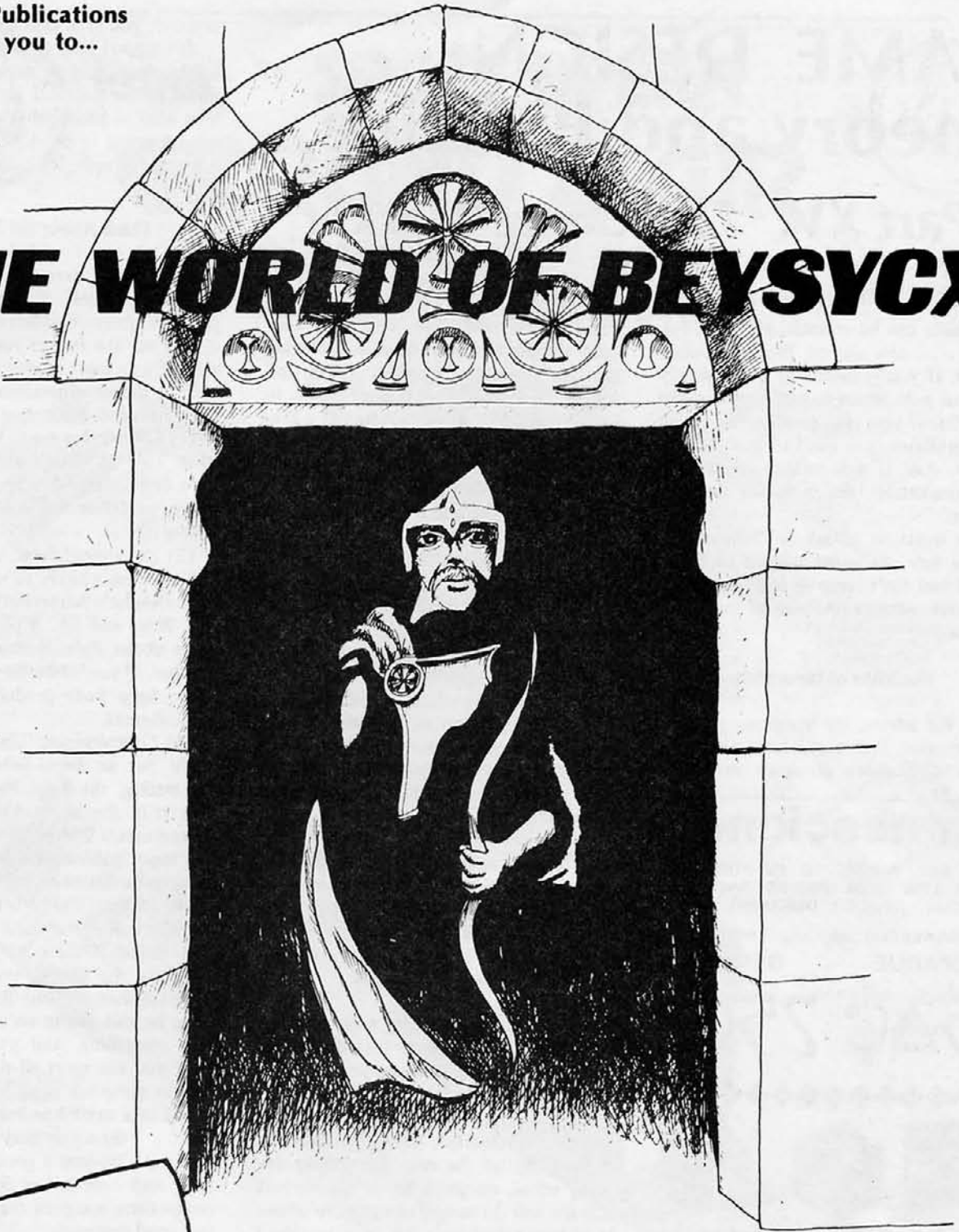

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GAME DESIGN: Theory and Practice

Part XV: The Game Market

by Nick Schuessler and Steve Jackson

A game can be realistic, playable, balanced . . . and *die* on the hobby-shop shelves. If you're inventing games purely for your own pleasure, you can skip this page. But if you plan to sell your design to a publisher, you need to consider the market. And if you publish it yourself, an unmarketable design means financial disaster.

The question to ask is "Why would anyone buy my game instead of Brand X?" If you can't come up with a convincing answer, forget it. Some of the things to consider:

The Risks of Innovation

On the whole, the wargame hobby is conservative. For every new idea that makes it, a dozen go down the drain. The last ten years have seen only four really *significant* innovations: role-playing games, minigames, computer games, and Ace of Aces. (AoA stands alone today. In a year there'll be more like it, and a generic name for the type. "Book games"?) If you think your new approach to gaming is the next big one, all right. But don't sink your fortune into it all at once.

The more innovation a new game displays, the likelier it is to fail, and the greater its success will be if it makes it. I recommend a happy medium; tie your fantastic new idea to some accepted patterns of gaming. This doesn't mean you should *duplicate* existing games – far from it. We have far too many clones of D&D as it is.

The best chance of a salable design comes when you take a popular *subject* and treat it in a slightly different way . . . or apply a tried-and-true *game system* to a new subject. Either way, you're giving the buyer something he can get a handle on. You may not have the hit of the year this way, but you're likely to come up with a game people will want to play. But there are other things to consider.

Know Your Gamers

Think about the people who will play your game. Pick a theme that they're interested in. This changes yearly; right now, fantasy is biggest, followed by s-f. WWII is still popular, modern simulation less so. Napoleonics, Civil War, and ancients bring up the rear. Everything else being equal, no game about the ancient Mayans will do as well as any game about knights and dragons. (This year, anyway.)

And the treatment of the game must fit the subject. For instance, SPI's *Swords and Sorcery* and AH's *Magic Realm* were both attempts to combine the fantasy theme with the standard sort of detailed movement and combat rules found in WWII games. The market wasn't ready for it. Most fantasy gamers don't want to play *The Longest Day*, even with dragons instead of airplanes – and sales showed it. Try a playtest (or just a bull session) with a group of the sort of gamers you think will buy the game. If they're not interested, you're in trouble.

It's a good idea to frequent your local hobby shop, and to subscribe to one or more of the national gaming magazines. You nees to know what's just been done, what's going to be done next year, and what the trends look like for the year after that.

Think About the Publisher

This applies even if you're publishing the game yourself. The factors a big wargame company considers in deciding what to buy are the factors *you'll* have to consider if you want to stay solvent. In addition to the considerations above, a publisher needs to think about:

(1) *Component cost.* This was discussed in TSG 38. Don't design a game that can't be produced at a profit. And if your target publisher has a standard format, follow it!

(2) *Appropriateness.* A fantasy game publisher isn't likely to want a WWII entry unless he's deliberately broadening his line. Write and ask. A publisher with one game about Zulus probably won't want another. If you're starting your own company, keep your product line balanced and coherent.

(3) *Completeness.* Unless the game is ready for an *immediate* evaluation by playtesting, the publisher isn't likely to look at it. A really good idea may sell (or at least create interest) in unfinished form, but most publishers won't look at anything but a finished design.

(4) *Pizzazz.* This gets back to the basic question: does this game have something that Brand X doesn't? No matter how complete the design, you've got to give the publisher, and the final buyer, *something* he can get in no other game. Find that something, and you're a designer.

If you can meet all these criteria, and if your game has been designed and playtested in a careful and workmanlike fashion . . . then you may have something that can earn you a good deal of satisfaction, and even a few dollars, in today's competitive wargame market. Good luck, and good designing.

* * * * *

This concludes our series on game design. The complete series – revised, updated, and with new material added – is now available in book form from SJ Games. GAME DESIGN (Volume I – Theory and Practice) sells for $5.00 – see ad in this issue. Volume II will be a book of supplementary material for the serious game designer or Game Master, and will be finished next year.

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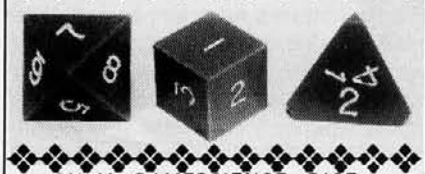

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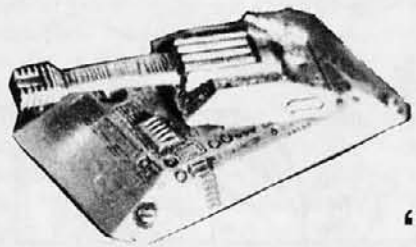

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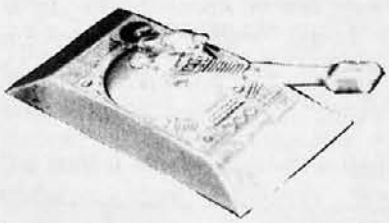

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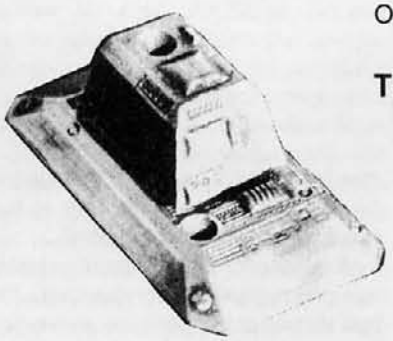

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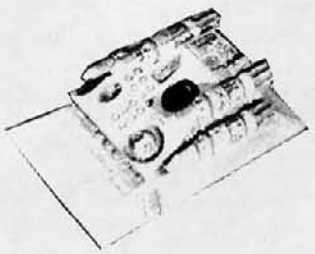

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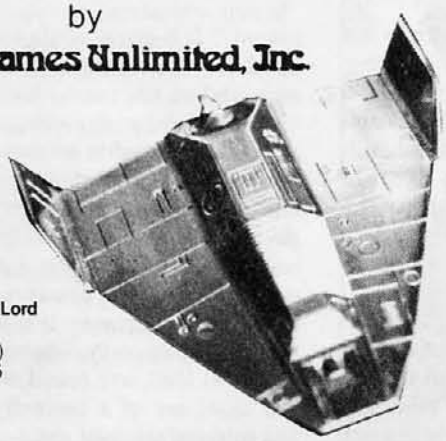

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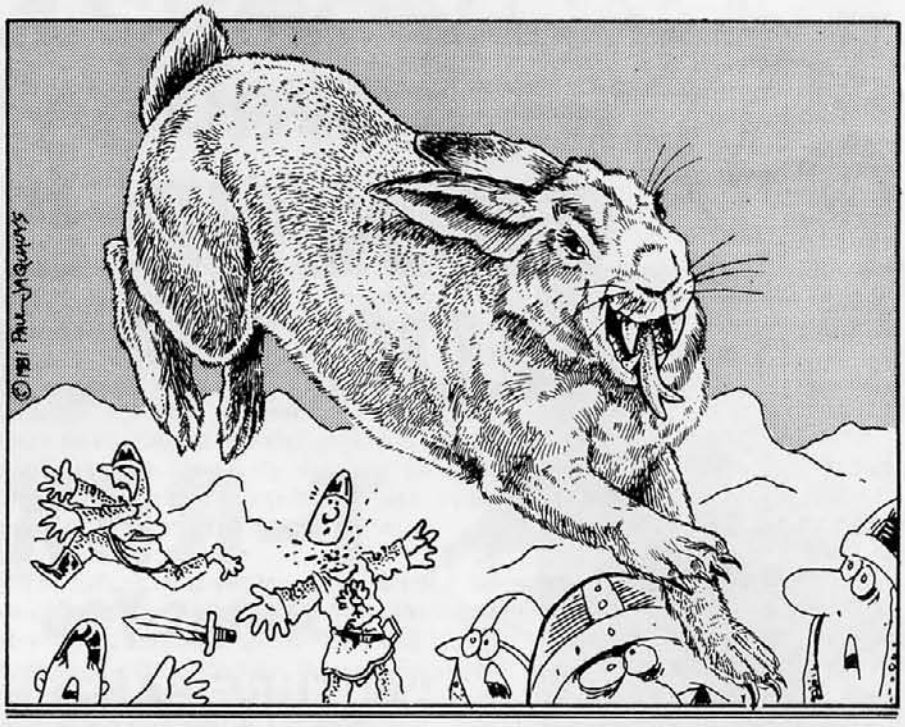
The adventure starts ordinarily enough. The party spends the night at a run-of-the-mill inn. In the morning, they are awakened by a cheerful little swallow, which happens to be clutching a coconut larger than its body. Also, the female characters are surprised to discover that they now look like men in drag.

The innkeeper brings breakfast. "Alright, who gets the huge slab of dead animal, and whose is the drippy gobbet of phlegm-like mush?"

There are no horses in the stable, only bones, spilled Worcestershire sauce, and the note, "Mes complimentes aux chef – Guy de Loimbard."

Most amazingly, huge letters will appear scrolling from nowhere across the sky:



(your name) AND THE HOLY GRAIL

by John Morrison and Forrest Johnson

Before play, the DM should study the scenario closely and make whatever changes he sees fit. He should try to obtain a copy of *Monty Python and the Holy Grail (Book)*, to pick up the dialogue and flesh out details. Once he feels he is fluent in Pythonese, he should make a copy of the map, and assemble a cast (see below).

Special Rules

Everyone loves special rules, right? There's nothing I like better than to ramble on and on about the special rules, filling up lots of column-inches, which saves me from having to . . . *(The management wishes to advise you that the person responsible for this paragraph has been sacked.)* Ahem.

Movement. There are no horses to be had in England. Travel on foot is one hex a day. However, if someone in the party bangs coconut halves together (the ones from the swallow will do; the poor thing is too tired from migrating to defend its treasure), speed increases to three hexes a day. Travelling by coconut, it takes one round to "mount" and another to "dismount." It is not possible to fight mounted. Lackeys to bang coconuts, tote luggage, and so on, can be had for a ridiculously small fee at any village.

Chivalry. Knights are expected to obey the rules of a distorted kind of chivalry. Knightly opponents must be fought in single combat. Monsters and multiple opponents may be fought in melee. It is unchivalrous to hack peasants, damsels and other noncombatants. It is perfectly chivalrous to run away, assuming you have fought at least one round or (in Sir Robin's case) are of a cowardly bent. Rape and robbery are right out.

Disbelief. A player may opt at any time to disbelieve. He immediately vanishes and wakes up back at the inn, discovering that it was all a bad dream. This is a good way to get rid of people who obviously aren't having fun.

Death. If any character's hit points drop below zero, add the amount of the deficit to 3d6. If the result is less than that character's constitution, he is "not dead yet." He will "get better" at the rate of one point per turn until he gets hit again (which automatically kills him) or he has one hit point. Characters that do manage to snuff it will wake up back at the inn, retaining all experience points.

Experience. This scenario emphasizes role-playing over mere hacking. Characters should get experience points for acting in character, and lose them for doing anything out of character. The DM will award these. In addition, anyone still with the party when the Grail is found gets a bonus of 500 experience points. Also, there is a special bonus of 100 experience points for every day less than 30 it takes to find the Grail. There are the usual points for killing monsters; suggested points for special monsters are given below.

End of Game. At game's end, those still in the game will wake up back at the inn. They will not have any of the treasure they might have gained on this quest, but will still retain anything they might have lost. The only permanent effect of the quest is experience.

Casting and Other Trivia

Ideally, the party should consist of six characters – four fighters, one MU and

one cleric. Regardless of previous alignment, all are Lawful Good/Silly for the duration of the quest. Characters should be limited to the 4th level or thereabout. The available characters should be cast in the following roles:

Sir Launcelot, the Brave. He gets points for charging headfirst into combat, loses them for being stealthy, devious or cowardly. He is always the last to run away.

Sir Galahad, the Pure. He gets points for courage, generosity, mercy and truthfulness, loses them for anything selfish, callous or immoral.

Sir Robin, the Not So Brave. He is the antithesis to the first two. He gets points for being vain, boastful and, above all, chicken. He is always the last to charge, the first to retreat.

Sir Bedevere, the Addled. He gets points for foolish plans and impractical strategies. (Improbably, these sometimes work out fine.) He loses points for being crafty or sensible. Arthur thinks he is very wise.

Tim, the Enchanter. He is power mad, and gets points for throwing the following spells: Burning Hands, Magic Missile, Pyrotechnics and Scare. He loses points for throwing any other spell, no matter how reasonable or necessary. In general, he is dour, taciturn, and delights in predicting disaster.

Brother Maynard, the Bland. He gets points for patching up characters and for being vague but pious. He loses points for hacking, for throwing offensive magic and for being sarcastic or rude. Brother Maynard does not start the quest with the Holy Hand Grenade of Antioch, though he knows how to use it. He does have a box of Holy Relics – some bones, scraps of clothing, and a jimmy said to have been the property of St. Dismas. He is the only member of the party who can read Aramaic.

More Casting and Trivia

The DM may wish to bolster the party at some point. Here are some more characters who are available.

Knights. Bors, Gawain and Ector are mentioned. These may be treated as young knights, eager to prove their courage.

Clerics. Brother Maynard has a number of assistants. They would get points for following his orders as ineptly as possible.

Bards. Their main function is to invent songs that annoy the fighters.

The Script, Some Trivia and a Bit of Absurdity

The characters start in Wattlinghamfordshirevilledale (1 on the map), a humdrum little village which lies between nowhere in particular and someplace else. The first encounter is with King Arthur, who charges them, as knights of the realm, to accompany him on his quest for the Holy Grail. (If someone objects that he is not a knight, Arthur replies, "Want to be?")

Arthur is a 6th level paladin. He is AC5 and carries the Holy Sword Excalibur. The sheath of Excalibur is magical; it prevents him from taking any hits whatsoever. (If someone asks why Arthur always seems to come through combat unscathed, he will answer, "Just lucky, I guess.")

Arthur feels it is beneath his royal dignity to enter single combat, unless at least one of his knights has tried and been vanquished. He will fight normally in melee.

As king, Arthur has the power to summon a levy once during the quest. The levy will include enough fighting men to resolve anything that can be resolved by brute force. Arthur will not call a levy unless ordinary measures have failed and the situation looks hopeless. The levy will disperse as soon as it has dealt with whatever it is. Arthur will refuse to call a second levy, explaining that, under the rules of feudalism, he is only allowed to call one a year.

Arthur has difficulty in counting to numbers higher than two. If he attempts to lob the Holy Hand Grenade of Antioch, there is a 50% probability that it will go off in his hand. (This will do him no apparent damage.)

For a king, Arthur has a poor grasp of geography. He cannot locate any special terrain feature, except Camelot.

Briefly put, the players' task is to find the Holy Grail. When that is accomplished, more letters will start scrolling out of nowhere:

AND SO ENDS THE QUEST FOR THE HOLY GRAIL

Strange-looking people will start disassembling the set, the property manager will attempt to collect the characters' equipment, and they will wake up back at the inn.

Deus Ex Machinas, but No Trivia or Absurdities

As usual in puzzle adventures, players may become frustrated and bewildered if they cannot figure out their next step. At this point, the DM should give them a friendly nudge. A number of Deus Ex Machinas are available; the DM should dock the players a certain number of experience points for each he has to employ.

The Narrator. He costs 50 points. Suddenly, the characters may hear a grandiloquent voice saying, "Will Arthur and his knights travel west to Swamp Castle and rescue the prince, or will they travel east . . . towards Death!"

God. Dock them 100 points if you have to use God. He will part the clouds and say, "Where do you think you're going? You didn't really expect to find the Grail here, did you?" If the players ask God where they should look for the Grail, he'll probably answer, "Shan't tell." Why not? "I'm the bloody Supreme Being, aren't I? I move in mysterious ways, don't I?" At this point the clouds will close with a loud clang.

The Director. He costs 200. Use him only if they really foul things up. He will walk out of nowhere, saying, "Cut! Cut! This is scene 12, where you slaughter the French taunters and find the map. We'll take this one again. Places, people . . . Action!" He will then disappear, and all will be as it was before the screw-up.

Random Encounters and . . .
(oh, shut up!)

Many random encounters are possible, depending on the DM's knowledge of the Python sketches. The following are suggestions. Each should occur only once, and in the order given.

The Old Man From Scene 24. He will be found muttering to himself by a fire, in a ramshackle old hut. He will listen to the characters in a daft sort of way, then say, "So . . . ye seek the Grail? Then ye must find the castle where the Book of Aaarrrggghhh lies hidden." He will laugh to himself and say no more until verbally prodded. "In that book, one may read of a cave . . . a cave no man has entered." Again, he will pause to laugh. "There is much danger . . . for beyond the cave lies the Gorge of Eternal Peril, which no man has ever crossed." Again pause. "Seek ye the Bridge of Death." Immediately, he, the fire and the hut will all mysteriously vanish.

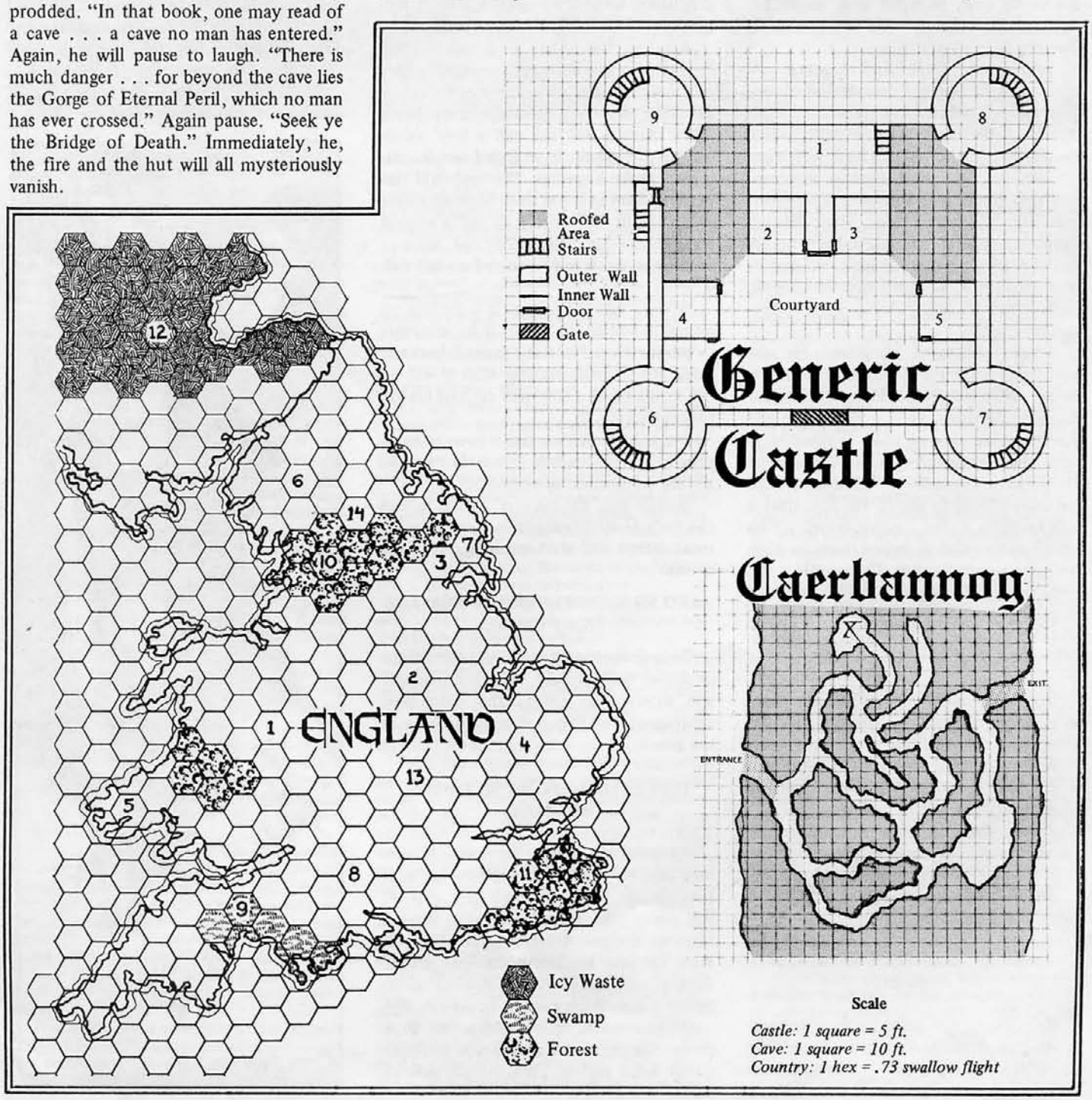
Sir Not Appearing in This Film. He will go galumphing in the opposite direction without raising his visor or responding to any queries.

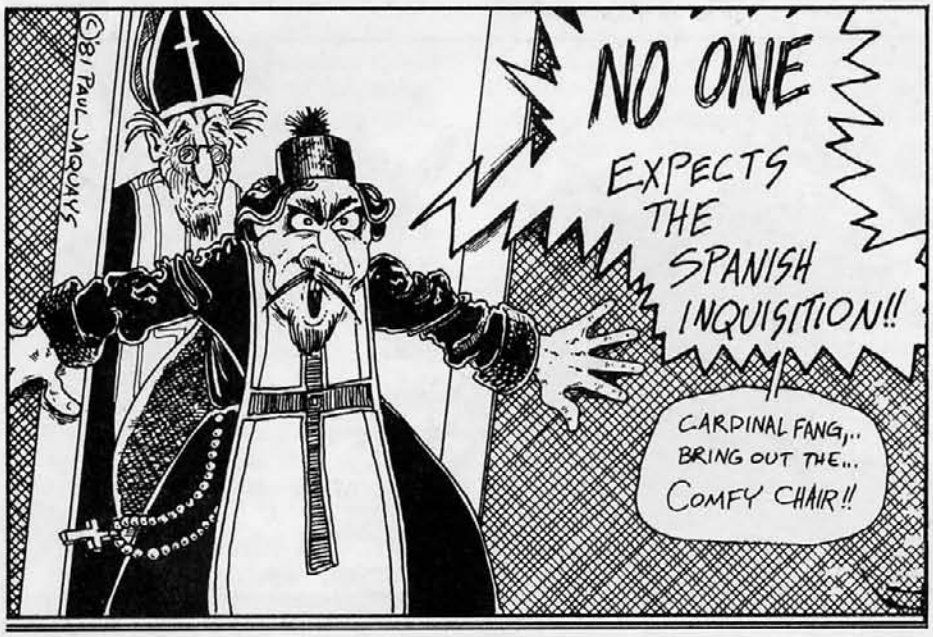
A Famous Historian. He will be standing by the road, describing the characters' most recent exploit to an unseen audience, in a not-too-flattering manner. Presently he will disappear, unless someone kills him. He is AC9 and has only one hit point. Whoever kills him will be arrested in 2-12 days. (The rest of the cast will be interrogated and then released.) It is not Lawful to resist arrest.

The Vicious Chicken of Bristol. Sir Robin will recognize this one. It stands 10 feet tall, a 6 hit dice monster, AC6, pecking for 1d8 damage. It is quite stupid and will probably ignore the party unless they attack it.

Dennis Moore. He will demand the party's lupines, at pistol point. He is a first level fighter, AC9. He has two pistols – neither requires a roll to hit. Both do 3 dice damage and cannot be reloaded. If Dennis is told the party has no lupines, he will ask, "Know where I could get some?" and presently shove off.

The Spanish Inquisition. "No one expects the Spanish Inquisition!" They will attempt to interrogate one character. It is not Lawful to resist the Inquistion.





The Map

In every hex entered, there is a 1-in-6 chance of a Nameless Village. Nameless Villages are poor, dirty, squalid and (50%) infested with the Plague. It may, at the DM's discretion, be possible to get some rumors about the nearest special feature in a village. It is also possible to purchase equipment in a village, but only after a lot of haggling. ("Sword? You want a sword? I've got an almost-new bardiche. How's that?")

Weather will be good, except as noted. Castles encountered will be built along the lines of the Generic Castle, or your own design. Generic Castles can be assaulted at the front gate, which is AC4 and can take 30 hits, or at the tradesman's entrance, which is a typical dungeon door. (The Holy Jimmy works fine on the latter entrance – 50 e.p. to the character that thinks of it.) Castle rooms which are not described contain what you would expect – barracks, chapels, kitchens, servants' quarters and so on.

Special features appear on the map as follows:

1. *Wattlinghamfordshirevilledale.* The party's starting point. Treat as a Nameless Village except that it has a name and is not plagued.

2. *The French Castle.* There are 12 obnoxious 1st level fighters. They have leather armor and a variety of silly pole arms – fauchards, ranseurs, voulges, guisarmes and the dreaded guisarme-voulge.

Guy de Loimbard is not in. The men at arms will claim to have the Grail, but will insult the party and refuse to let them enter. If the party attacks, the French will hurl animals at them – cows (1d10), sheep (1d6) and pigs (1d4). One animal will be hurled per round (1/3 chance each type), and there is a 50% probability it will hit someone. Also, in the courtyard, the French have a siege engine, which looks rather like a giant slingshot. It will be used for hurling animals at long range if the party lingers in the vicinity. If cornered, the Frenchmen will hold daggers to their own throats and say, "Wan step closair an ze Frog gets eet!" To show they mean business, they will cut their own throats.

Rooms 4 and 5 contain the aforementioned animals. Room 2 contains Guy de Loimbard's collection of Grails. There are about a hundred of them, none very Holy, each worth about 10 g.p. Room 3 is Guy's personal quarters. Lying on a table is a map. (Give the players a copy of the "England" map; they should have no indication what the little numbers mean.)

3. *The Black Knight.* He is a 3rd level fighter, AC5, with a bastard sword. "None shall pass," is his line. Scattered about are remains of earlier victims.

The Black Knight must be fought in single combat. He has an unlimited number of hit points. However, any hit of 19 or 20 will sever one of his limbs. He will insist that it is "only a flesh wound. I've had worse." If his sword arm is severed, he will be reduced to punching, kicking and butting (1d4 per attack).

The Black Knight is worth 100 experience points.

4. *Witch Burning.* The peasants in this village have decided that an attractive young woman is a witch, and will beg to be allowed to burn her. Whatever tests the party propose will invariably prove her to be a witch. Brother Maynard gets 50 e.p. if she is eventually executed, Galahad gets 50 if mercy is shown. However, if the woman is freed, she will immediately turn into an ugly crone, cackle hideously and turn the nearest character into a newt. (A touch from any of Brother Maynard's relics will restore him.) She will then vanish.

5. *Merlin's Castle.* Merlin can be heard banging away in Room 4, which is a workshop. He has a wrench in his hand, and is tinkering with the armor of a rather plaintive knight, who is hanging from the ceiling and has a lance sticking through him. (Merlin is saying, "All magic armor does this when it's new. It's meant to give with the body.") Merlin will come, wiping his hands on a rag, to greet his guests.

Asked about the Grail, Merlin will say, "The Grail? Just a minute." He will go rummaging through an old pile of scrap iron until he finds an old, rusty goblet. ("Here, how's this? I could spray it down, strengthen the base with a couple of wing nuts and there you are.") Galahad and Brother Maynard get 50 pts. for rejecting the spurious Grail.

If asked, Merlin will cheerfully agree to sell the characters any magic item in the book. All of them are worthless.

6. *Anarcho/Syndicalist Commune.* The peasants here love to talk about their government. They will inform "King" Arthur that supreme executive power derives from the mandate of the masses. If allowed to go on, they will explain that they adopted their enlightened form of government because the old, reactionary government ran around oppressing citizens, raising unjust taxes and blowing things up in the name of religion. (This is a clue to the Holy Hand Grenade.)

The peasants only use the castle for their biweekly meetings. It is vacant, full of moldy tapestries and rusting armor. Room 5 was a chapel; it contains an altar, some mildewed vestments, three golden crucifixes (100 g.p. each) and the Holy Hand Grenade of Antioch.

The Holy Hand Grenade does 10d6 in a radius of 2". It can only be used once.

7. *The 3-Headed Knight.* Before meeting him, the characters will see warning signs: "Camelot 43/Certain Death 1," "Beware," "Go Back" and "Dead People Only." If they persist, they will meet the 3-Headed Knight. He is a 4th level fighter, AC5. He fights with a battle ax in one hand and a bastard sword in the other. He has a bonus of +1 to hit and +1 to damage, for strength.

The 3-Headed Knight will challenge the party to fight, two at at time. If they refuse, he will attack anyway. (Since this is unchivalrous, he can then be fought in melee.) Those who kill the 3-Headed Knight share 100 e.p.

However, if someone can get the three heads arguing among themselves, the 3-Headed Knight will start fighting himself. This is worth 50 e.p.

8. *The Castle Anthrax.* As the characters approach the hex, they will be told, "The weather looks threatening." Soon it will be raining, hailing and thundering. Anyone caught outdoors will take 1 hit an hour from exposure. However, a castle will loom providentially at hand . . .

Male characters must roll their wisdom or less on 1d20. A failure means they will stay in the castle 1d6 days. (They will be unable to warn anyone who decided to wait outside, being fully occupied.) Those who miss their throw will recover 1 hit a day during the time they are at the castle. Galahad and Brother Maynard both lose 50 points if they stay at the castle.

(It is also possible to be dragged, unwilling, away from the castle. Those doing the dragging must have greater strength than those being dragged, and must have successfully made their saving throw to enter the castle in the first place.)

9. *Swamp Castle.* When the party approaches the castle, someone will be hit by an arrow. (However, if he falls below 1 hit point, he is automatically "not dead yet.") There is a hastily scrawled note attached, "To whoever finds this note – I have been imprisoned by my father who wishes me to marry against my will. Please, please, please, please come and rescue me. I am in the Tall Tower of Swamp Castle." (The Tall Tower is number 9.)

Of more interest is the opposite side of the note, which appears to be the frontpiece of a book, "THE BOOK OF AAARRRGGGHHH/ Being a Compilation of Songs, Embroidery Patterns and Directions to the Cave of Caerban-

nog/With Service Stations Marked in Red/Second Printing."

There are two ways to get the book. One is to rescue Prince Herbert. His father will resist this, and so will the 8 guards (1st level types, with leather armor and silly pole arms). Father is a 4th level fighter, AC7, with dagger. However, he will not fight. He will say, "Wait a minute! Stop that! What do you think you're doing?" This may lead to the second way to get the book.

If the party calms down enough to tell Father they are knights of Camelot, he will knife his son, and will let the characters have the book on the condition that one of them (not an NPC) marries his "daughter," Princess Lucky. She has charisma 6.

If someone agrees to marry the princess, he will have to stay at Swamp Castle for the wedding. This will take 1-6 days (medieval wedding, remember?). Those who agree to stay with him can recover 1 hit point a day during this period.

On the other hand, if they rescue Herbert they will find he is no prize. Herbert is a 1st level bard, AC9, with 3 hit points and no weapons. (However, he has a constitution of 18.) Herbert will make a nuisance of himself until he is eaten by the Black Beast of Aaarrrggghhh, or falls into the Gorge of Eternal Peril.

10. *The Knights Who Say Ni.* There are six normal-sized knights and a Tall Knight. The shorter knights are 2nd level fighters, AC5, with bastard swords. The tall Knight is a 3rd level fighter similarly equipped, but he cannot fight effectively since he is standing on stilts. (This is not immediately apparent; however, the first hit will cause him to fall over.) Also, every time the knights say "Ni!" (not "Ni.") the party takes one hit.

The knights will accost anyone travelling through the forest. They will say that they are the guardians of the sacred words: "Ni," "Peng," and "Neee . . . Wom." They will demand a sacrifice – you guessed it – a shrubbery. By no coincidence, Roger The Shrubber may be found in the nearest Nameless Village. He will demand at least 500 g.p. for a shrubbery. However, a shrubbery can be extorted from him by threatening to say, "Ni!"

If a shrubbery is obtained for the Knights Who Say Ni, they will demand another one, and that someone in the party chop down the tallest tree in the forest with a herring. The second shrubbery may cause some problems, because the "threaten to say Ni!" trick will not work for the party twice. However, chopping down the tree will present no difficulty, as the herring provided is equivalent to a +3 battle ax. (The character who uses it gets to keep it for the duration of the quest, and also gets a 50 experience point bonus.)

The Knights Who Say Ni are vulnerable to a certain word – probably an article or pronoun – which causes them to lose one hit point every time they hear it said. (But if anyone pointedly says "it" to them, they will reply, "It's no good showing off your vocabulary . . .")

11. *King Brian's Castle.* Approaching the castle, one may observe gentlemen hanging by their nostrils, tied to hedges by their kidneys, etc. If conscious, they will tell the party they are approaching the castle of King Brian, who used to be called Brian the Wild, but has calmed down a lot recently. Entering the courtyard, the party will observe King Brain seated on his throne, with his surviving advisers around him. All have their left arms missing, the result of an old edict. The whole court looks rather shabby.

Lined up along the battlements are Brian's guards, 12 1st level archers with longbows and their left legs (not arms) missing.

King Brian will insist that the party sing for him. He will promise or threaten anything to get them to sing. But if they agree, they will notice that the guards have drawn their bows. (If they go ahead anyway, Brian will be laughing so hard that the survivors can retreat in peace.)

Brian the Actually Rather Calm will not let the party go unless he gets to kill at least one singer. If the party elects to hack, the archers will fire, but the advisers will run away. Brian will rant at them. (He is AC9 and 10 hits to kill.) Brian's crown is worth 200 g.p. In Room 2 is his treasury – 43 g.p., 271 s.p. and a worn-looking teddy bear.

If the party kills King Brian, the local citizens will be quite grateful. They will host the characters at the castle as long as they like. (The party will recover 1 hit point a day.)

12. *The Frozen Land of Nador.* If the party goes in this direction, they should be told, "It's getting very cold. Provisions are running low." If they persist, the third day out they should be told, "You are starving. Unless you eat one of your number, you will all starve to death." Anyone (except Arthur) can be elected. If the players fail to elect someone for food, Arthur will appoint someone.

The party must eat one person a day so long as they remain in the Frozen Land of Nador, which extends indefinitely to the north and west.

13. *Camelot.* This is a cheerful place, dangerously so. Those who visit Camelot have a 10% chance of succumbing to the general merriment (check daily). This is equivalent to Otto's Irresistible Dance. It is not possible to rest, recover from wounds, escape or do anything but sing and dance. The fit lasts until a saving roll is made (check daily).

Those who manage to stay in Camelot without dancing will recover one hit a day. They can obtain equipment and ordinary provisions gratis. They may, at the DM's discretion, hear rumors of a French grail expert who has established a castle to the north.

14. *Castle Where They're Keen on Swallows.* People here seem to think of little else. The party will be invited to view a collection of mounted specimens, and to hear lectures on ornithology. If they accept, they will learn a number of surprising facts, among them that the airspeed velocity of an unladen European swallow is 14 miles per hour, whereas the airspeed velocity of an African swallow has never been measured.

The party can stay here as long as it likes, recovering 1 hit a day.

Caerbannog and Beyond

Caerbannog is located somewhere within four hexes of Swamp Castle. (The players will find out where when they obtain the Book of Aaarrrggghhh.) As the party approaches the cave mouth, a white rabbit will jump out. This is either (1) an ordinary rabbit, (2) the Holy Rabbit of Aaarrrggghhh – 50 point penalty all around if it is slain – or (3) a Vorpal Bunny. A Vorpal Bunny is a 4 hit die monster, AC1, does 1d8 damage, decapitates on a natural 20. A Vorpal Bunny is worth 100 e.p.

If the party gets past the rabbit, it will find itself in a rambling, unmappable maze of caves. If someone remembers to stick to the left hand wall (or, for that matter, the right hand wall), the party will eventually come to a grotto which has an inscription in Aramaic. (50 points to the character that thinks of this.) At that time, the

entrance will mysteriously seal itself shut, but the exit will mysteriously open.

Every turn that the party remains in the cave, there is a 10% chance that they will encounter the Black Beast of Aaarrrggghhh. It is a 6 hit dice monster, AC2, doing 2-12 points of damage. However, there is a 10% chance per round that the animator will drop dead of a heart attack, and the monster will disappear. (100 pts. if the characters kill the Black Beast; nothing if it disappears.)

Having passed through the dread Cave of Caerbannog, the party will find themselves on a narrow, winding path above a bottomless gorge. Eventually, they will come to the Bridge of Death.

The Bridgekeeper, of course, is identical with The Old Man From Scene 24. His line is, "Stop! Who approacheth the Bridge of Death must answer these questions three, ere the other side he see!" Those who fail to answer the questions are cast in the Gorge of Eternal Peril, and awake, screaming, in the inn. Sometimes, it is possible to turn a question against the bridgekeeper. There is perhaps a 30% chance of this, more or less, depending on the cleverness of the attempt. Stalling results in gorgification.

The first question is always, "What is your name?" The second is, "What is your quest?" The third question might be as follows (roll 2d6):

2. Who is the master of the French castle? (Guy de Loimbard.)

3. What is his name? (He points to another character; it is illegal and naughty to look at the character sheet.)

4. From what does supreme executive power derive? (A mandate from the masses.)

5. What goes black-white black-white black-white? (A nun falling downstairs.)

6. What are the sacred words? (Ni, Peng and Neee . . . Wom.)

7. What is your favorite color? (Whatever.)

8. What is the capital of Assyria? (Nineveh – *not* Babylon.)

9. What is the airspeed velocity of an unladen swallow? (14 mph; if someone asks, "An African or European swallow?" the Bridgekeeper will answer, "European," without blinking.)

10. How many fingers am I holding up? (However many.)

11. How many damsels are there in the Castle Anthrax? (Eightscore. "160" is acceptable.)

12. What is the name of the Black Knight? ("I don't know." Anything else means gorgification.)

This should thin the party out. Having crossed the Bridge of Death, it is only a short distance to the Sea of Fate, where a magic boat is waiting. (But the Sea is shallow enough to be waded, if anyone tries.) The Grail is in Room 1 in the Castle Aaarrrggghhh on an island not far from the shore.

However, one or more disasters will arise before the party can get the Grail:

1. The castle is occupied by French taunters. (But they were expecting that, right?)

2. If the Famous Historian is dead, the police arrive and arrest the party. (But they were expecting that, too.)

3. The Old Man From Scene 24 reappears. "He who would cross the Sea of Fate must answer these questions, twenty and eight." (This seems too mean for reason, but the Old Man can be tossed in the Sea of Fate without danger – 100 points for the character brave enough to try this.)

4. The castle is guarded by the Black Knight. "Told you it was only a flesh wound."

5. The 3-Headed Knight is in the back of the boat, with a fishing pole. "This is my boat. Find your own."

6. Just when they think they've got the Grail, they see this little white rabbit . . .

Lots of other disasters are possible. The DM is limited only by his imagination and sense of mercy.

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No. 18. IceWar designer's intro; variant scenarios for Invasion: America and War of the Ring; additional equipment for Traveller; mounted Melee; "Referee, Declare Thyself!" (role-playing GM technique).

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No. 20. Olympica tactics; Psionics in Traveller; TARTARS & MARTYRS; Reality in Melee; designer's optional rules for Ice War; designer's article on Starships & Spacemen; "Rip-Off Blues" (wargaming frauds).

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No. 22. Ice War tactics; Black Hole physics; PARTY BRAWL; 1978 SF/fantasy game survey results; Fantasy Trip short story.

No. 23. Invasion of the Air Eaters designer's article; Ogre meets Ice War; Sticks & Stones expansion; Vikings and Valde in The Fantasy Trip.

No. 24. Black Hole designer's intro; "The Psychology of Wargaming"; Naval Melee; "The Four-Howitzer Defense in Ogre;" variants for Chitin: I, The Creature that Ate Sheboygan, and John Carter of Mars.

No. 25. Stellar Conquest issue . . . designer's article, tournament tactics, and variant scenarios; also – strategy in Rivets; benefit-cost analysis for Ice War; "Everyday Life in The Fantasy Trip."

No. 26. Oneworld designer's intro; tactics in GEV; variations on Wizard; computers in wargaming; Life-sized Melee; and a variant that puts human forces into Rivets.

No. 27. Hot Spot's designer's intro; Time Travel; Nuke the Air Eaters (gaming atomic war); Weapons for Hobbits in TFT; Muskets in TFT; Game Design Part 1; 5 pages of game reviews.

No. 28. 1979 Game Survey results; Overmen in TFT; A Guide to SF/Fantasy Game Publishers; Task Force Games report; Writers' and Artists' guides; 7 pages of reviews; Game Design Part 2; Deus Ex Machina.

No. 29. Fantasy Trip designer's intro; Painting Fantasy Miniatures; Fantasy and SF game magazines surveyed; Game Design Part 3; more Deus Ex Machina; 7 pages of reviews.

No. 30. KUNG FU 2100; Painting Fantasy Miniatures Part II; Index to Game Articles; Game Design Part 4; Programmable Calculators; 10 pages of reviews.

No. 31. "Sam Beowulf"; 1980 Game Software survey; Game Design Part 5; Random Maze Generation; 9 pages of reviews.

No. 32. Traveller issue . . . Alternate Character Types, reviews of play aids, scenarios, and variants; also Game Design Part 6; Deus Ex Machina; "Minus Two Reaction;" software survey update; Yaquinto Games report; 9 pages of reviews.

No. 33. Play-by-mail issue . . . Feature reviews of four PBM games, a Warp War Campaign, Survey of PBM companies; also, Contest Report; Company Report from Schubel and Son; "End Game;" GEV scenario; Game Design Part 7; Deus Ex Machina; The Good Guys, Part I; and 10 pages of reviews.

No. 34. Miniatures issue . . . Cardboard Heroes Designer's Notes, LOTR Miniatures, Painting Fantasy Miniatures Advanced Techniques, Survey of miniatures manufacturers; also "The Challenge;" Artifact Designer's Notes and Expansion Rules; 3-D Displays II; Game Design Part 8; Wish Contest winner; and 8 pages of reviews.

No. 35. The 1980 Game Survey; Solitaire Ogre; Notes for Novice DMs; The War of the Worlds featured; Insane Variants on Stomp!; Character Contest results; More Psionics for Traveller; Game Design Part IX; Deus Ex Machina; and 9 pages of reviews.

No. 36. Computing damage in Star Fleet Battles; The Fire Web, Artifact for Traveller; a Featured Review of Akalabeth; Eon Products Company Report; The Ten Deadly Sins of Computer Game Programming; Computer Graphics contest winner; and 8 pages of reviews.

No. 37. Gaming the Alien; Hyborean Risk; Improved Mission Resolution for Freedom in the Galaxy; Troubles in Valetia; Cosmic Encounter Review; FGU Company Report; Winners of the Weapons Contest; Ten Deadly Sins Part II; and 6 pages of reviews.

No. 38. 1980 Game Survey Results; Designer notes for The Lords of UnderEarth; Used ships for Traveller; Selling Your Game Article; Expert D&D and Time War reviewed; Combination Game Contest; The Complaints Department; and 7 pages of reviews.

No. 39. Computer issue . . . Designer's Notes on Akalabeth, Strategic Simulations Report, Strategy in the Warp Factor, Computers to Go, a TRS-80 Briefing, An update on the gaming world; also Rumor Reliability in Traveller; Scenario for Triplanetary; "Fantasy World;" Magic contest results; Simple Traps; and eight pages of reviews.

No. 40. Cumulative Index to Game Articles; Game Design: Role-Playing Games; Planet of Adventure: Tschai; a new Traveller combat system; results of the Non-Human Races contest; Deus Ex Machina; Aboard the Leviathan; and six pages of reviews.

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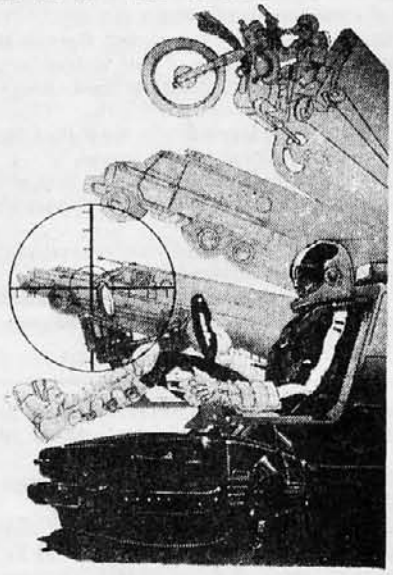
CAR WARS



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Tips for TFT Players

by Jim Dickey

The following is a list of hints based on almost three years of *TFT* play. I hope that this article will inspire some of you other players to write in and share your experiences.

1. Sending a character out in the world with a low DX should be grounds for a charge of criminal negligence.

More often than not, I have seen the smart, the strong, and the heavily armored ripped apart by the quick. Characters with a low adjusted DX flail away turn after turn without hitting, low DX wizards waste ST on botched spells, and both usually meet a quick end if they have to make a saving roll against DX.

An adjusted DX of 10 gives a 50% chance of hitting, casting a spell, or making a 3 dice saving roll. Because of the bell curve nature of the numbers generated by 3 dice, a 9 reduces your chances to 37.5%, while an 11 raises it to 62.5%. The lesson from these figures should be obvious: Don't start a character with a DX lower than 10. Don't encumber him with armor or goodies that reduce DX below 10. Don't have him use weapons he doesn't have the talents for, or that are too big for him. Pick talents that raise DX.

A related matter: DX points "traded off" for armor protection are a better deal than those same points allocated to ST, when it comes to protecting your character. Say you have a beginning character and you've given him ST 10, DX 10, IQ 10. You still have two points to give him. You're main concern is keeping him alive. Assuming I've convinced you to maintain his adjusted DX at 10, you have two options. You can give the 2 points to ST, and he'll get to absorb two hits of damage *once*. But if you put the two points on DX, you can put him in leather armor, (and still maintain an adjusted DX of 10), and he can absorb two hits of damage any number of times. (But to keep your decision from being too easy, though, remember that ST is good for other things besides absorbing damage, like bigger weapons and being able to carry more loot and equipment.)

2. Don't overlook the value of pole weapons.

I don't know if it's just the people I play with, but in my experience beginning players tend to overvalue missile weapons at the expense of pole weapons. Due to the close-quarters type of fighting most prevalent in TFT, bowmen usually get off a shot or two and then get sliced up by an adjacent figure while trying to draw a new weapon. If this happens to you, try screening your missile weapon users with pole arm wielders. The +2 DX for a set pole weapon, and the double damage bonus for a charge attack, make pole arms devastating weapons. The *Advanced Melee* rules, with two-hex jabs, and pole arm attacks coming off first, make them even more effective.

The next time your group of adventurers takes on a giant or a dragon, try to get somebody with a pole weapon around behind it. The +2 or +4 DX and the double damage bonus will usually bring a quick end to your adversary.

3. The character who tries to do everything usually ends up doing nothing well.

This applies more to beginning characters than to the "veterans." This is mainly a matter of selecting talents wisely.

For starters, if you have to have a character who knows both spells and talents, you're better off with a wizard who knows a couple of talents, rather than a hero who knows a couple of spells. Wizards pay double to know talents, (and in some cases not even that), while heroes pay triple for spells. Heroes also cast those spells at -4 DX. Don't waste your hero's attribute points knowing something they can't use very well.

When picking talents for new characters, don't spread their areas of expertise too thin. There is a tendency to try and make your character a jack of all trades. Don't. Consult the table of jobs and pick those talents which will make your character strong in some area from the start, (fighter, leader, thief, martial wizard, etc.). Later on, as he gains experience, you can turn him into a cardboard Renaissance man.

4. Think "cost effectiveness" when selecting talents and spells.

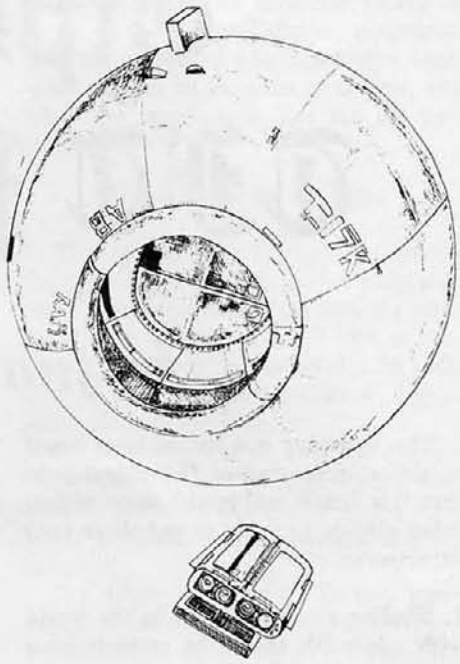
Say you have two IQ points to allot to a weapons talent. If you take a peculiar weapons talent, like Lasso, you can use a lasso, period. But if you spend that two points on Sword, you can use up to eight different weapons, depending on your strength. If your character should ever get caught weaponless on an adventure, he'll probably be able to find a suitable sword to use long before he finds a boomerang or some nunchuks just lying around.

When selecting a wizard's combat spells, consider giving him a high/low mix. Give him the most powerful missile spell he can use, the most powerful defensive spell, and one of the "cheapies," like Blur, that doesn't cost much to cast. The same goes for summoned creatures; take the most powerful one you can get, but also take Wolf or Myrmidon. It's been my experience that the character who loads up on the fancy spells usually doesn't have the ST to power more than a couple of them over the course of an adventure, while the wizard with several of the simpler spells proves to be more of a help to himself and his companions.

When selecting the talents you have your character "learning," keep this in mind. Assuming that you will use all your experience points to add attribute points to IQ, (a dubious assumption), it only costs 375 experience points to learn three one-point talents. It costs 2500 points to learn three three-point talents! Knowing this, you might want to keep your character's aspirations modest.

Featured Review:

TRIPLANETARY



by William A. Barton

The journey was well underway. Venus had been left far behind and Mars was looming on the viewscreen. The red planet would soon fall behind as well, and the liner would be through the Belt on its way to Ganymede. The small party of corporate magnates were confident that, once at the mining conference, they'd have no trouble straightening out the colonies on their recent disagreements with the inner planets over ore rights in and around the Belt. It would only be a matter of time . . .

Suddenly a klaxon sounded throughout the ship. They were under attack! The liner was being fired on by three unidentified vessels, configurations matching those of the pirate group based on Clandestine in the Belt. The captain's mayday had been acknowledged by the Terran dreadnought ***Tycho Brahe*** *on station in the Belt. The dreadnought was proceeding at full thrust to rendezvous with the beseiged liner. Meanwhile, however, one of the pirate vessels was maneuvering into boarding range. Would the* ***Tycho Brahe*** *arrive in time or would the magnates end their hopeful journey as hostages of the Clandestine outlaws?*

While the above situation could have been taken from one of several science fiction stories of the Golden Age of SF, it is actually a scenario from GDW's classic game of space combat, TRIPLANETARY. First released in 1973, TRIPLANETARY was one of the first space combat games on the market, and quite a success for the fledgling company, Game Designers Workshop. Out of print since 1976, TRIPLANETARY has just been re-released in a new edition, updating and expanding upon the original game's design.

It's good to see TRIPLANETARY back in print. As the Granddaddy of GDW's SF games, its descendants including such popular systems as *Traveller, Mayday* and *Belter,* much can be learned from this venerable classic. It's nice to note, too, that the game still plays as well as ever, even with the revisions and additions (and some omissions) of the new edition. Would that the same could be said about some of the newer games flooding the market.

The game itself concerns ship-to-ship combat in our own solar system during the 21st century. The plastic-coated map is a stylized representation of the solar system from Mercury to Jupiter, including Venus, Earth, Luna, Mars, the Asteroid Belt, Ganymede, Callisto, Io, and Sol itself, with accompanying gravity fields, bases and detection ranges. The scale is not accurate, but playable – which is what really counts. In TRIPLANETARY's unique movement system, vectors for direction and distance, are drawn directly onto the game map with grease pencil. It was one of the first – if not *the* first – to use hexes in vector movement.

The vector-movement system is the heart of TRIPLANETARY, making the game stand out amidst the many "free-movement" space games currently available. To move, a ship expends energy points, each point adding one hex of movement to its vector. A ship which has spent one EP per turn for three turns will have a vector (a total movement) of three hexes per turn until an EP is spent to accelerate, decelerate, or change direction. A moving ship will continue to move – unless it hits something or declares a stop – just as would a real object in zero-G. The gravity of a planet or moon will affect movement as well, causing the ship's course to be deflected, pulling it into orbit, or causing it to crash, depending on the ship's vector.

The vector system is essentially the same as in the original TRIPLANETARY. It is really much more clear than the similar systems in *Traveller* and *Mayday.* Perhaps the use of both hexes *and* drawn vectors is what makes the difference. In any event, TRIPLANETARY should aid understanding of either of these systems.

There are some significant differences between the old and new editions. The most obvious is the change from the old, drab, oblong cardboard box to the standard, flat box. The box change was probably due to a change in format. In the original *Triplanetary,* the map was a soft one with a clear overlay for drawing the vectors without marring the map. To avoid creasing the overlay, the map had to be rolled up, hence the oblong box. The map in the new edition is of plastic-coated cardstock which can be folded into the flat box quite easily. The need for the overlay is eliminated, as vectors may be drawn right on the map and then erased after play.

The rules have been expanded and the combat charts and tables have been placed on a separate cardstock reference sheet. The counter sheet is identical in both editions, and the grease pencil in the old edition is retained in the new. The presence of the pencil is both gratifying and annoying: gratifying in that it isn't necessary to go out and buy one to play; annoying in that the counters and rules have grease pencil markings all over them from the pencil rolling around loose in the box.

One notable difference is in the scenarios with the game. A few of the scenarios are similar or identical to those of the old edition. This is a bit odd, as some of these scenarios – the Grand Tour scenario in particular – were carried over into *Mayday*, which itself was a sort of "new edition" of TRIPLANETARY

minus the confines of the solar system. The only change in this scenario between the two editions is the loss of the restrictions on combat. Retaining this scenario, still available in *Mayday*, seems a bit of an overkill situation for gamers possessing both games, especially when other scenarios were either dropped or changed more or less inexplicably. I can understand why the Invasion scenario of the first edition was dropped – its ursinoid aliens, the Pan, no longer fit in with GDW's future history. It has been replaced in the current edition with the three-player Nova scenario in which unknown aliens try to blow up the sun with Nova bombs – complicated by East-West rivalry on Earth. But why the popular three-player Piracy scenario was dropped is less clear. It surely couldn't have been due to any similarity to scenarios in *Mayday* or any other game – if so, the Grand Tour would have been dropped, too. Perhaps this was due to space (no pun intended) considerations. If so, I'd have opted to drop the Tour and keep the Piracy.

Other changes are evident in hold-over scenarios as well – the Interplanetary War now uses the new megacredit price system for ship purchases rather than the point system, for instance, and the scenario's nukes have been added to the overall rules. Several new scenarios are added: a Fleet Mutiny, a sequel to Escape, called Retribution, and a Prospecting scenario.

There are some definite problems with this edition of TRIPLANETARY. The editing of the rules is not as clean as it could have been. This is especially evident with the reference sheet, which is full of typos and misinformation. Unless one has access to the first edition, the damage descriptions will seem ambiguous. It's hard to understand how a company with such high standards as GDW could let something as poorly edited as the reference sheet slip through. I hope it will be replaced in future printings.

A further problem surfaces with the Packet, an armed transport ship. The combat strength for the ship as listed in the rules contradicts the information given on the counters. Also, the Packet is completely ignored in the price list of ships and equipment. Personally, I'd estimate its worth at between 20 and 30 megacredits, depending on whether you go with the combat value of the rules or the counters.

Another problem with TRIPLANETARY, which is more a matter of taste, is that its weapons systems are less than satisfying. It's very difficult to hit a moving target with torpedoes, mines, or nukes. These systems are really only effective against stationary or planetary targets. The only effective weaponry against moving targets are the ships' big guns – a form of automatic cannon, according to the first edition. These are disappointing in the light of the lasers and missiles of *Mayday* and other later GDW games. At least the first edition's rationale, that ray guns and beams are farfetched, has been dropped. Such a philosophy seems dated considering recent developments in laser and particle technology. And even GDW's own *Belter* (which also takes place in the solar system) uses lasers and particle beam weapons.

All in all, I like TRIPLANETARY, even with the flaws evident in this edition. I am glad, though, that I have a copy of the first edition for comparison; it definitely helps. GDW should release an errata sheet for those of us who only have the new edition. Still, TRIPLANETARY is worth more than a second look, especially for those gamers who fancy themselves collectors as well as players.

TRIPLANETARY (GDW); $11.98. Designed by Marc Miller and John Harshman. Boxed, with 22" x 28" map, 76 counters, 8-page rulebook, grease pencil, one die. Two or more players; playing time ½ hour up. Published 1981.

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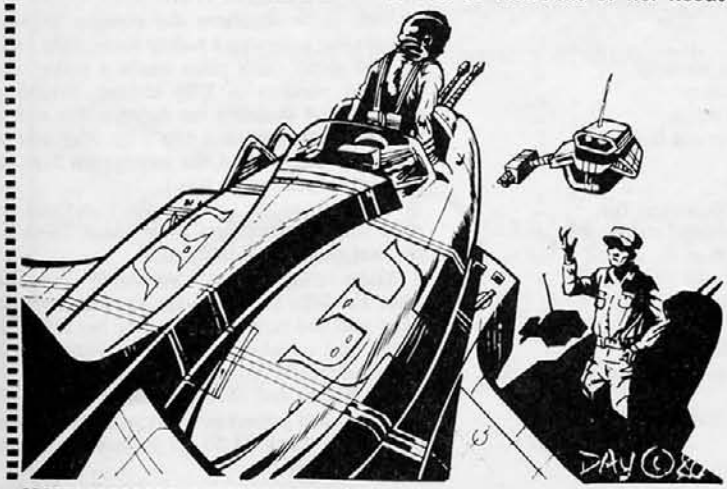

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Capsule Reviews

ATTACK OF THE MUTANTS (Yaquinto); $8. Designed by Neil Zimmerer. Album game with 5-page rulebook, 25" x 12" board, 133 thick counters, and a reduced gameboard reference card, suitable for xeroxing. Two players; playing time 1 hour. Published 1980.

"ATTACK OF THE MUTANTS should be considered by players to be a rerun of one of the Grade B horror/science fiction films. The cast of characters should be familiar, as you have come to know them from dozens of old movies."

It seems that something has gone terribly wrong in the "Big Melt Down of 1993" and the few normals left are in the science building at Central State Tech, desperately trying to warp to an alternate Earth. They do so if they can survive 10 turns. The mutants are, of course, trying to stop them.

The game map represents a single building. The humans usually end up fighting a rear-guard, delaying action. They are generally overwhelmed by the sheer number of the mutants, if they choose to stand and fight. The play balance is fairly even, possibly weighted in favor of the mutants. There are any number of ways to even this out, however.

The game is very simple. There are no terrain effects, and no combat results besides "eliminated." However, various optional rules and alternate scenarios are suggested, and it is easily possible to devise your own. If the game appeals to you, you should be able to find at least one scenario which works for you.

(Let me say a few words about component designing. Yaquinto is once more showing its inventiveness in producing a full-sized game at minimal cost. This is one of their second-generation album games, with the game board still folding in to become the "jacket" for the other components, but this time there are closable pockets to keep from losing any of the counters. Let's hope they keep up the good work. End of plug.)

The graphics are distinct and colorful, although it can be annoying that the counters are too large for some of the rooms. The game is probably worth $8, especially if creature-features are your kind of show.

– David Ladyman

A FISTFUL OF TURKEYS ["Some Turkey Games" (Metagaming)]; $1.95. Designed by Some Turkey. This game contains one 21" x 16" sheet with the rules, 42 counters, and the map all printed on it. Two players; playing time 30-60 minutes. Published 1981.

This game simulates the struggle between turkeys and a deranged turkey hater, Billy Jackal. The game takes place inside a turkey pen and play consists of Billy kicking, strangling, crushing and shooting the turkeys. The turkey player gets to peck and trip Billy. Play continues until either all of the turkeys are dead, or the game has lasted 10 turns.

Throughout the entire game, humorous artwork and comments are to be found. These are the best qualities of this game.

Game play becomes extremely one-sided since the Billy player always has 6 combat options and the turkey player only has two. The board and counters must be reproduced and mounted on stiff board.

All in all I feel that this game is not even fit for a beer and pretzel game. It possesses nothing unique or worth $1.95. It is, however, a real "turkey" game.

– Tom Gordon

ABBREVIATIONS

AC = armor class
AD&D = *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons*
AH = The Avalon Hill Company
APA = amateur press association (sometimes action point allowance)
BEM = bug-eyed monster
CHA (or CHR) = charisma
CON = constitution
CPM = control process monitor
c.p. = copper piece(s)
CR = credit(s)
C&S = *Chivalry and Sorcery*
CRT = combat results table (sometimes cathode ray tube, i.e., TV screen)
d = die (3d6 means three 6-sided dice)
D&D = *Dungeons and Dragons*
DM = dungeon master (sometimes die modifier)
DOS = disk operating system
DX (or DEX) = dexterity
EHP = evil high priest
e.p. = experience point(s) (sometimes electrum piece(s))
EPT = *Empire of the Petal Throne*
FBI = Flying Buffalo, Inc.
FGU = Fantasy Games Unlimited
FRP(G) = fantasy role-playing (game)
GAMA = Games Manufacturers Association
GDW = Games Designers' Workshop
GM = game master
g.p. = gold piece(s)
h.p. = hit point(s)
HTK = hits to kill
IQ (or INT) = intelligence
K = kilo-bytes of memory
LGM = little green men
LK = luck
MA = movement allowance (sometimes magical/military/mechanical aptitude/ability)
MR = monster rating
MU = magic user
NPC = non-player character
OSI = Ohio Scientific
PBM = play by mail
PET = Personal Electronic Transactor (by Commodore)
POW = power
RAM = random-access memory
ROM = read-only memory
S&T = *Strategy and Tactics*
SF&F = science fiction and fantasy
SIZ = size
s.p. = silver piece(s)
SPI = Simulations Publications, Inc.
SR = saving roll (sometimes strike rank)
ST (or STR) = strength
T&T = *Tunnels and Trolls*
TFG = Task Force Games
TFT = *The Fantasy Trip*
TRS = Tandy-Radio Shack
TSR = TSR Hobbies, Inc. (formerly Tactical Studies Rules)
UPP = Universal Personality Profile
WIS = wisdom
ZOC = zone of control

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Library Data
Traveller Supplement 8

Michicon X—Oakland University—Rochester, MI—June 12,13,14

Pacific Origins— Dunfey Hotel—San Mateo, CA—July 2,3,4,5

CWA-CON '81—Northlake Hotel—Northlake, IL—July 16,17,18,19

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SURVIVAL / THE BARBARIAN (Task Force); $4.95. Two games in one, minigame format. SURVIVAL designed by Bob McWilliams; THE BARBARIAN designed by Ian Livingstone. One 13-page 8½" x 5½" booklet, two 11" x 17" maps, 108 counters, reference sheet, wrapper. SURVIVAL is for 1-6 players; THE BARBARIAN is for 1-2. Playing time 15 to 45 minutes (SURVIVAL) or 15 to 30 minutes (THE BARBARIAN). Published 1981.

This package contains two very simple games. In SURVIVAL, one to six crash-landed scouts trek cross-country, trying to reach a survival station before dwindling stores and nasty critters do them in; in THE BARBARIAN, Vaarn the Barbarian treks cross-country, trying to find sword-and-shield artifacts before wounds, a curse and incomplete rules kill him.

These two games are all right for introductory-level wargames, and are never represented as anything but. SURVIVAL is the better game of the two; though by no means a simulation of anything, it still sports rules complete enough that they are not easily abused, allows options for variable numbers of players and variable abilities of characters, and has a number of scenarios available. It can be moderately amusing, and at least permit certain minimal tactics: how best to use your movement allowance to reach your goal in time, which weapon to use in any given encounter, and so on.

THE BARBARIAN does not share these plusses. A game can easily be won or lost merely by the initial, random placement of the artifacts, curse and decoys. The very game-turn sequence means that the barbarian forfeits time after time the ability to attack offending monsters. There are no zones of control, yet the barbarian counter may not move through an opposing counter, even if he would end up on an unoccupied hex. SURVIVAL really has few glitches, except that a reasonably experienced gamer will find very little challenge in it.

In short, a beginning gamer will find SURVIVAL worthwhile; forget THE BARBARIAN.

–Aaron Allston

SWORDQUEST (Task Force Games); $6.95. Designed by R. Vance Buck. Boxed, with 16-page (Boxed Ed.) rulebook, 16" x 20" map, 108 counters, two charts, 2 dice. 1-3 players; playing time 1-2 hours. Published 1981.

"SWORDQUEST is a semi-roleplaying Fantasy game for one, two, or more players, depicting the quest to find the lost Sword of Lumina, the only object which is powerful enough to destroy the evil Sogmoth." Good and Evil forces are searching the towns of Tirrane for the sword, for obvious reasons. Druids, as the potential third force, are hoping to locate the sword and thus control the balance of power. In each town is a treasure, guarded by a monster or an aligned fighter. Three (out of 37) treasures are swords; one is the Sword of Lumina and the other two are counterfeit. Returning a sword to your citadel, and then ascertaining that it is the true sword, wins the game.

This is an update of an earlier (1979) SWORDQUEST issued in softpack (reviewed in TSG 28). I agree with the positive comments made by Bruce Campbell in that review. The game is, for the most part, quick and playable. The components have been competently and pleasingly rendered. The background material is generally thorough and well-reasoned. The rulebook is well organized and fairly well cross-referenced. Task Force fortunately knows better than to change things just for the sake of change.

The limitations of the rules themselves still remain the biggest problem, especially in combat. "Withdraw" and "retreat" are possible combat results, yet these terms are never defined. Withdrawn characters may not re-enter combat in that turn, but may they pass magical weaponry to another fighter? Do they move out of the combat hex? May a healing potion be used during combat, by the phasing player? By the non-phasing player? Can fighters get the benefit of more than one magical weapon at the same time? What is the result of a 7 (adj.) die roll, or a +4 column shift? (Neither are covered by the CRT.) May a victorious fighter take his opponent's weapons while others are still fighting? None of these, or other, questions have obvious answers, and the questions will come up right at the most heated part of the game: when two major forces have engaged and the outcome hangs in the balance.

There are other omissions (for instance, the terrain type of the center-most hex, the Dragonlair, is not given). Trying to fight a battle when it is slowly becoming clear that the designer never considered the situation is *very* frustrating. It is the designer's responsibility, not the gamer's, to compose clear, usable rules; I submit that the designer has failed in this responsibility.

SWORDQUEST, in most ways, is a nice game, at a reasonable price. It is not too complex for the new gamer, at which it is primarily aimed. I wish I could recommend it. If you don't mind composing rules as you play, you might check it out.

– David Ladyman

SUPPLEMENTS

BASIC ROLE-PLAYING (Chaosium); $3.95. Designed by Greg Stafford and Lynn Willis. 16-page, 8½" x 11" battleboard, 85 counters, 50 dice chits. One or more players; playing time varies. Published 1980.

Just what it says on the label, folks. Not really a game but an introduction to the fine art of role-playing. Chaosium produces the role-playing game *RuneQuest*, so it's no surprise that BASIC ROLE-PLAYING is oriented to that system. Game reviewers have praised *RuneQuest* for its logical construction and coherent rules, so the system isn't a bad way to present role-playing to novices.

BASIC ROLE-PLAYING does it well. It teaches character generation, a simple combat system, and gives hints for beginning referees. The writing style is concise, informative, humorous, and there are plenty of examples to illustrate the concepts. The cardboard counters have impossibly cute stylized drawings. This is just what I needed when I started role-playing 5½ years ago.

Aye, there's the rub! It isn't 5½ years ago. When *Dungeon & Dragons* gained popularity, a "Basic" version was released. It wasn't necessary – either you already knew how to play or somebody was going to teach you, on *Dungeons & Dragons* or another game. *Basic D&D* wasn't even compatible with the much publicized "Advanced" version. Similarly, BASIC ROLE-PLAYING is too little too late. *RuneQuest* is long established, does an adequate job of teaching role-playing, and there are now even more games to choose from. If you want to teach role-playing to a very young, but literate, child, BASIC ROLE-PLAYING is excellent. Otherwise, for all its charm, it's not much use.

– Ronald Pehr

THE BOOK OF RUINS (Judges Guild); $4. Designed by Michael Mayeau. Supplement for *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* (AD&D). 30-page, 8½" x 11" booklet. Referee and one or more players; playing time ¼-2 hours, depending on scenario. Published 1981.

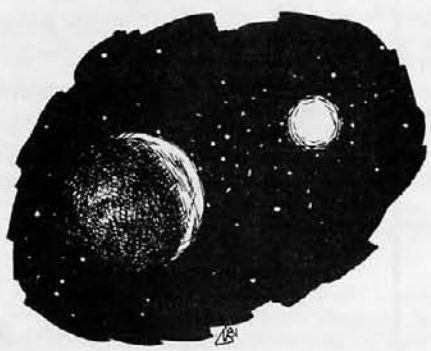
THE BOOK OF RUINS consists of ten brief dungeon-type adventures using four to eight *AD&D* characters. Each adventure takes place in a building with 3-20 rooms, and is designed for characters of given levels: Three are for 1st-3rd level characters, one for 8th-10th, four in between, and one higher. Suggestions are given for integrating scenarios into an existing campaign.

This book was a pleasant surprise. At first glance, the scenarios appeared too short, simple-minded, nothing but slay-monsters-rake-in-fabulous-loot; characteristic of *AD&D* adventures. But they were fun to play! The higher level scenarios fully challenge the powers of the characters and the tactical planning ability of players: Scout ahead, guard your flanks, support each other, or you don't get out alive!

However, each scenario *is* only slay-monsters-rake-in-etc. The low level scenarios are too short, the *AD&D* hit point system brings low-level characters instant death or instant victory, and treasure is far too generous for what the characters accomplish.

AD&D is billed as a role-playing game. THE BOOK OF RUINS has little of that. But if you take it for what it's worth – fast action adventures, for random adventures or part of a campaign – and if you enjoy gaming which is heavy on the bloody combat, you won't be disappointed.

– Ronald Pehr



GEPTOREM (Group One); $6.95. Designed by Group One. Approved for use with *Traveller.* One 8½" x 11" book, 22" x 17" planetary map, bagged. Two or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

GEPTOREM is the *Traveller* adventure from the anonymous folks at Group One (even a direct query failed to turn up any designers' names). This is their fourth so far, though the introduction proclaims it their third on alien worlds, *Port Xanatath* apparently not considered a world. Like *Port Xanatath* and *Pen-Latol's World,* GEPTOREM is actually a *setting* for an adventure rather than an adventure scenario as was *Mission to Zephor.* A brief history of the planet and the peculiarities of its culture, the types of fauna which may be encountered, meteorological data, military organizations and some details of the rulers of the five nations of Geptorem are presented – along with maps and descriptions of the planetary defense centers

and major cities – so that this information may be used by a referee to create his own unique adventures on the planet Geptorem.

The planetary map of Geptorem is very nice graphically: full color on slick paper. I suspect that a large portion of the $6.95 asking price is due to this map – along with, perhaps, the gaudy comic-bookish cover. Several of the creatures native to Geptorem are interesting, if improbable. And the descriptions of the cities and planetary defense centers, while stark, tend to be more complete and accurate than those of earlier Group One releases. Many of the ideas and concepts presented display the potential to stimulate good adventures.

Like previous Group One products, however, GEPTOREM is plagued by too many omissions. Guidelines aren't given on ravine and quake results on the encounter tables. A "special surprise" which is to occur on a certain die roll in foggy weather is never explained. How other charts and tables are to be used often has to be guessed at as well; items alluded to are rarely fully explained. Typos, misspellings and poor grammar abound. A further problem is that the planetary map doesn't seem to be in full agreement with the listed planetary profile: for one thing, there seems to be far too much water, ice and flora for a planet with a hydrographic rating of only "1." The cities, too, seem far too small on their individual maps for the stated populations. The rules booklet *is* a bit slim for the asking price – and the ragged-margin typed copy of the rules still screams out "amateur," despite the improved graphics. Group One could improve the quality of their products several hundred percent simply by blind playtesting, taking the extra time to type their right margins evenly if they can't afford typesetting, and hiring a proofreader with a good command of English grammar.

For creative *Traveller* referees who haven't the time to design their own worlds and cultures from scratch, GEPTOREM might prove to be of use – even if it is somewhat overpriced. Compared to newer approved-for-*Traveller* items such as *High Passage* and the Paranoia Press supplements, however, the Group One adventure delivers less than it should for the price. I strongly advise G-1 to seriously consider my above suggestions so that they'll be able to continue to compete in the growing *Traveller* market.

– *William A. Barton*

I.S.C.V. LEANDER (FASA); $5.00. Designed by L. Ross Babcock III. Approved for *Traveller*. One 8½" x 11" cover/information sheet, five 17" x 11" deck-plan sheets, bagged. Published 1981.

The LEANDER is the third in FASA's series of approved-for-*Traveller* starship deck plans. Unlike the first two vessels, the LEANDER is an "intersteller (sic) commercial vessel" rather than a para-military ship. The basic ship is a 600-ton "tug" to which up to ten 200-ton cargo, fuel or shuttle barges may be attached. As with earlier FASA releases, the deck plans are laid out in one-half-inch squares suitable for regulating the movement of 15mm miniatures or half-inch counters using either *Snapshot* or *Azhanti High Lightning* rules.

The main feature of interest of the LEANDER is the idea of its modular cargo barges. This allows the ship to carry quite a bit, yet leaves the main unit a highly maneuverable vessel (maneuver and jump 6) should flight become necessary. That coupled with its armament – two missile turrets, four triple laser turrets (beam, I presume; the designer forgot to say) – allows it to double as a fighting ship as well. This is a concept unique so far with *Traveller* vessels, though it is reminiscent of the battle tug of *Star Fleet Battles*.

As with previous FASA ship plans, there are problems with the LEANDER. While not as incomplete as the earlier *Fenris* or, especially, *Tethys*, the LEANDER is still missing several pieces of vital information. A universal ship profile would have been nice, for example, saving owners the necessity of searching through the *Traveller* books to determine the nature of the ship's drives, powerplant, etc. A more complete table of symbols should have been provided, too. While it isn't difficult to guess the "T" = turret, "MT" = missile turret and "E" = elevator, their omission – when there was plenty of room on the table – is a case of plain sloppiness. Likewise, there is a section telling what will cause a console to malfunction, but no mention of the effects of such a malfunction. The plans for D deck contain several errors – missing letters or misplaced explanations – and what little information is given on the barges is contradictory. Parts of the ship have been poorly planned as well: access for both missile turrets are limited to 180 degrees of arc when barges are in place, and one is entered through a stateroom (the gunner's I would hope); and the "wardroom/sanitary closets" in the staterooms in lieu of freshers are ridiculously small for the stated purpose.

Overall, I'd hesitate to recommend the I.S.C.V. LEANDER – or its sister ships – for the price. A referee who has neither the time nor inclination to design his own ships for miniature actions might find something of use here, provided he doesn't mind the omissions. Anyone else should pass this up and design his own. FASA, if they plan to continue releasing ship plans, should either lower their prices or double-check each item for completeness before they ever send any out.

– *William A. Barton*

I.S.P.M.V. FENRIS and S.F.V. VALKYRIE (FASA, 811 W. Junior Terrace, Chicago, IL 60613); $7.50; Designed by L. Ross Babcock III. Approved for use with *Traveller*. One 8½" x 11" cover sheet, room details sheet, ten 11" x 17" sheets of deck plans, bagged. Published 1980.

The "Interstellar Para-Military Vessel" *Fenris* and its "stellar fighting vessels," *Valkyrie* fighters, are the subjects of FASA's second set of approved-for-*Traveller* starship deck plans. Like the *Tethys*, the *Fenris* is blocked out in half-inch squares for use with miniatures or counters. Nine plan sheets display the 6 decks of the *Fenris* while a 10th shows various views of the *Valkyrie* fighters. The cover sheet describes the performance of the *Valkyries* while a separate sheet explains various features of each separate level of the *Fenris*. Additional information, such as a history of the 300-ton ex-freighter turned fighting vessel, crew lists and weaponry, can be found scattered throughout the plan sheets.

Fenris is much more complete than *Tethys*. Weaponry is spelled out precisely. The plans, while black on white, are sharper and more distinct than those of the *Fenris'* sister ship. The details of each room are better defined. The *Fenris* itself is a more impressive vessel than FASA's first offering, and would probably prove more useful in the average *Traveller* campaign than the *Tethys*.

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There are still a lot of flaws, especially typos and misspellings. The folks at FASA seem to think "Captain" is spelled C-A-P-T-I-A-N as it appears that way nearly every time it is used. It is a bit difficult to reconcile some of the deck plan layouts with the interior profile provided on the first sheet. For some reason, no interior plans of the *Valkyrie* fighter are provided at all, though five different exterior views are displayed. The 12g acceleration noted for the *Valkyrie* is just a bit far-fetched, too, placing it at a higher tech level than any other space vessel currently existing in the *Traveller* universe. Except in an engagement with an actual naval task force, use of the *Fenris* and its fighters could easily unbalance many a well-planned situation.

Overall, I feel the I.S.P.M.V. FENRIS to be just a bit overpriced for what the buyer is actually getting. For a referee who wants new ship plans and doesn't have the time or skill to create his own, FASA's creations might come in handy. Otherwise, it would probably be better to do your own.

– William A. Barton

LEGION OF GOLD (TSR); $5.50. Designed by Gary Gygax with Luke Gygax and Paul Reiche III. Adventure for *Gamma World.* 32-page adventure book and ref shield with 6 maps. Two or more players; playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

LEGION itself deals with a mysterious army of golden, glowing warriors ravaging the countryside around the Great Lake Mitchigoom. Mini-adventure 1, in the same book, concerns an excursion to rescue the victims of a nest of "Buggems." The second and third mini-adventures involve the exploration of a group of ruined survival shelters and an underwater laboratory run by rogue androids. New creatures, weapons and equipment and two new "treasure" tables have been included for use with this module – all of which can easily be integrated into any *Gamma World* campaign. Several maps, including a players' map and a more complete GM's map of the area surrounding Great Mitchigoom (though no ruins labeled "Geneva" are pictured) complete the package.

There are several points of interest in LEGION OF GOLD for *Gamma World* players. The Barony of Horn, which controls the area, can provide a fertile spawning ground for many further adventures beyond those essential to the module's set excursions. Several of the new creatures are quite interesting, especially the mutant Katkins and the Deathmoss. And the addition of pistols, rifled muskets, rifles and shotguns to the more futuristic *Gamma World* weaponry adds a touch of realism *a la The Morrow Project.*

There are, unfortunately, a few strong AD&D overtones leaking into this module. Also, there are a couple instances of missing info, and some moderately outrageous jokes – such as the discovery in one of the deserted shelters of a crate marked "Zgwortz" (but no awful green things, thank goodness!).

Overall, though, LEGION OF GOLD is a worthy effort and can easily stand with the best of TSR's D&D modules. It should make *Gamma World* fans more excited about the game and may even draw some who have been less enthusiastic to give it a try as well.

–William A. Barton

NYSTALUX (Group One); $6.95. Supplement approved for *Traveller.* One 8½" x 11" 18-page book, 22" x 17" full-color map. Number of players and playing time indefinite. Published 1981.

NYSTALUX is the fourth in Group One's series of alien worlds. Like most G-1 adventures, there is no set scenario. Rather there are descriptions of the planet, its inhabitants (an insectoid race known as the Sedas), its fauna and the main cities of Nystalux. There is an added element to this adventure – a downed pirate ship which the "Brain bugs" of the Tech-6 Sedas are examining. As the Sedas are described as unfriendly to strangers (the pirates tried to kill them), the GM may derive a scenario from the danger that they will learn the ship's secrets (shades of *Starship Troopers*!).

The Seda are an interesting race as first described, more like I envisioned members of GDW's misnamed Hive race than anything else. Though I do wonder about those eating orifices on the backs of their heads. Seems a bit improbable biologically. Some of the new animals seem similarly far-fetched but would make for interesting situations nonetheless. The map adds greatly to the appeal, too (just make sure you're wearing sunglasses the first time you look at it).

NYSTALUX, unfortunately, suffers from many of the problems that have marred Group One's products from the start: too-numerous typos, the omission of necessary information, the amateurish ragged-typewritten appearance of the rules, etc. The omissions, at least, are not as noticeable as in *Geptorem*, so maybe G-1 is showing some progress at last. However, this adventure is somewhat overpriced, even with the flashy graphics. There are problems here as well; the map in my copy has several brushmark-like streaks across it and some of the colors seem out of register. I was quite disappointed, too, in the city and cultural descriptions: The facilities for the Seda sound in most cases more suitable for Earth humans than alien insectoids.

NYSTALUX will probably prove useful to some *Traveller* referees. Those who are a little short on the cash, or who'd rather create their own cultures from scratch rather than have to alter someone else's, may wish to pass on this one.

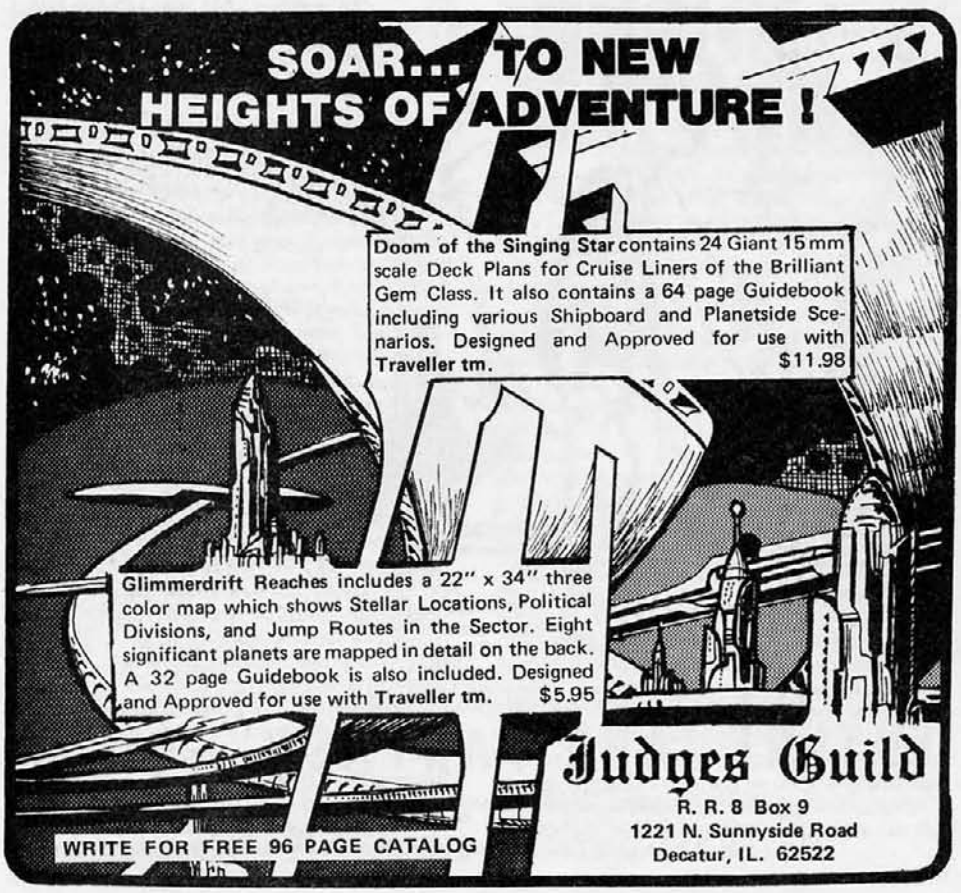
– William A. Barton

SCOUTS & ASSASSINS, 2nd EDITION (Paranoia Press); $3.00. Designed by Donald P. Rapp. Approved for *Traveller.* One 5¾" x 8½" 20-page booklet with 11" x 17" two-color deck plan insert. Published 1981.

The second edition greatly expands and revises the character generation system for the scout service, making the book, in essence, a whole new work. Additions include a third service branch, Surveillance, a ranking system for Scouts in the form of "pay grades," and revised tables to reflect the new features of the second edition. The Unfit for Service section has been expanded. The information on Delta Research accompanying the Serpent-class Scout Ship plans has been updated.

With this new edition of SCOUTS & ASSASSINS, the Scout service becomes an even more desirable one for aspiring *Traveller* characters, offering even more skills and benefits than ever before. The new method of rolling each term to determine in which branch the Scout will serve is a nice touch, too, allowing for more variety in assignments and a wider range of available skills. The new Scout uniform and special service identibuckle open up some intriguing possibilities for campaign use.

Unfortunately, the second edition is not completely perfect. In the process of revision, a few flaws seem to have crept in. The most serious omission is that of Gambling skill. With no provision for acquiring Gambling, the higher levels of the Cash Allowances table are unattainable when mustering out. A lesser problem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is the substitution of the 1st edition's automatic Pilot-1 skill in Basic Training with a roll on the SOS table in the new edition. It is conceivable that a Scout may never gain Pilot skill. This can cause problems if the Scout is assigned to Exploration or Surveillance.

In spite of such oversights, SCOUTS & ASSASSINS, 2nd EDITION, is a very professional work, worthy to stand alongside GDW's own *Traveller* materials. Even if you own a copy of the first edition, I recommend the new one; you'll find enough new material to make it well worth the price.

– William A. Barton

SPACE OPERA GROUND AND AIR EQUIPMENT (FGU); $5. Designed by Edward E. Simbalist and A. Mark Ratner. One 8½" x 11" 38-page rulebook. Published 1981.

This is the first supplement to "the most complete SF role-playing system ever published." GAE covers military hardware and heavy systems, along with aircraft and space fighters, and does indeed push *Space Opera* closer to its designers' claims of completeness. GAE lists and describes 133 AFVs, 63 aircraft and 18 space fighters and bombers of the different races and nationalities of the *Space Opera/Space Marines* universe. Additionally, it adds to the parent system rules for air combat, nukes, CBW, flamers, calliopes (anti-missile/shell energy projectors), missiles, scramblers, nuclear dampers, grenades, anti-tank and anti-aircraft fire, electronic warfare and other military factors. Some of these are derived or taken straight from *Space Marines*, others are new even to that system: the Hellburner and Planetbuster thermonuclear weapons, for instance.

GAE is much better organized than SO and greater pains were obviously taken in proofreading it. While there are still a few bad typos, these are relatively easy to figure out – unlike SO where whole sections of vital information were omitted or typographically mutilated beyond recognition. Most of the vehicles and aircraft are well-conceived and presented, and many of the AFVs correspond closely with those given in *Space Marines*. The Union Guard Continental Siege Unit (read "Ogre") of *Space Marines*, for example, is easily recognizable as the Terran light CSU Thor in GAE. The only differences are slight variations in weaponry and better armor in the GAE versions. The GAE aircraft, however, are quite different from those in SM. But by adjusting the SM aircraft tables, they become compatible enough to complement rather than contradict the more fully described GAE craft.

GAE still displays some problems, I'm afraid. Some seemingly minor – but nevertheless important – bits of information have been overlooked. The vehicle hit table, for example, is to be used interchangeably to determine hit locations on both AFVs and aircraft. The table, however, is set up in terms of AFVs only, so that one is left to wonder how to administer a turret hit on a turretless airplane. (The answer, from SM, is that a turret hit on a plane is considered a crew compartment hit.) Several of the charts and tables are likewise left unexplained, so you will need *Space Opera* to help you decipher some of these. And whoever decided to picture starfighters as swept-wing jet aircraft should stick to illustrating historical rather than SF games.

Overall, I would rate GROUND AND AIR EQUIPMENT as an indispensible play aid for military inclined *Space Opera* enthusiasts in spite of its flaws. Those who use *Space Marines* rules for their miniature play should find it a useful tool as well. Now – if we could only get an *errata sheet* for *Space Opera*, we could *really* use GAE. Are listening, FGU?

– William A. Barton

TEMPLE BOOK I (Judges Guild); $3. Designed by Bob Bledsaw and Dan Hauffe. Play aid for any FRP game. 62-page, 8½" x 11" booklet. Playing time and players as for game used. Published 1981.

This booklet provides instant physical layouts for temples that fantasy characters might encounter. There are 45 unique floorplans, each showing a single structure, and 5 smaller-scale floorplans showing groups of buildings. All are drawn on a square grid background, ideal for plotting movements of characters if you assign a scale to the grids. For temples that are going concerns, instead of merely explorable ruins, there are numbered charts allowing random dice rolls for such things as temple ceremonies, artifacts, and guards.

Whoever drew these maps missed a calling in interior decoration. Temples range from rude stone squares and tents, to buildings with enough rooms to have a dungeon adventure. For those referees who can't draw straight lines with a ruler, and/or put their creativity into character interactions rather than constructing maps, this booklet would be cheap at twice the price.

The random chart collection inevitably becomes repetitive, and using the rolls from several together can give incongruous results. That's a basic problem with any set of charts; these just seem to be more random than most Judges Guild products.

Although this is "for any fantasy campaign," there's a definite D&D bias in the charts. But you won't buy TEMPLE BOOK I for charts. You'll buy it for 50 pages of maps, which are usable in any game; there'll be at least one to fit any given adventure you've conceived. Those who benefit from this type of game aid will get a lot of that benefit from TEMPLE BOOK I.

– Ronald Pehr

TULAN OF THE ISLES (Midkemia Press); $6.00. Designed by Raymond Feist and Stephen Abrams. One 8½" x 11" 54-page book and 11" x 17" city map. Published 1981.

TULAN follows the same basic format as Midkemia's earlier *City of Carse*, providing interior maps of specific areas of the city keyed to the overall map and listing and then explaining each structure or site shown. The book also includes specific descriptions of some of the more interesting characters an adventurer visiting TULAN might encounter. Each is keyed to a certain area of the city: i.e., Poor, Rich, Merchant or even Anywhere. Some of the history and social order of the city is outlined as well, as Midkemia begins the process of drawing their current and future releases into a consistent imaginary country, Because TULAN is designed to be usable with any role-playing system, the authors include a section of general notes on converting characters, spells, monsters, etc. from the Midkemia system (due to be released as another FRPG later on) into other role-playing systems.

TULAN OF THE ISLES is a well-conceived work and should prove quite useful to GMs who don't have a lot of time to sit down and create entire cities for their players to visit, sack or otherwise interact with. When used in conjunction with Midkemia's earlier *Cities* book (though this is not necessary), TULAN will present countless opportunities for adventure. The time and effort the authors have put into TULAN is evident – if only from the fact that,

though clearly shot from a typewritten rather than typeset manuscript, time has been taken to justify the right margin of the type, giving the product a "clean" look that other companies would be advised to emulate. Another nice touch on the part of the authors is that certain buildings on the map are left to the GM to describe, allowing touches of individuality to each GM's version of the city.

Other than the fact that TULAN sports no brothel for weary adventurers so inclined, I see few problems with the book. The illustrations are a bit crude and some of the abbreviations and symbols can be a little confusing at times, but these are not serious flaws. The guidelines on system-to-system conversion are rather sketchy, so that players of some games may have to use their own ingenuity in fitting Tulan's inhabitants into their universes. The most serious flaw I can find is in the listings of other RPGs the authors feel TULAN would be compatible with: *Traveller* is listed as a TSR product!

TULAN OF THE ISLES will undoubtably enhance any fantasy role-playing game with which it is used. Unless you abhor "instant cities," it deserves a place in your fantasy library.

– William A. Barton

PLAY AIDS

D&D OUTDOOR GEOMORPHS SET ONE: WALLED CITY (TSR); $4.00. Designed by Gary Gygax. Play aid for D&D. Twenty-two 5¼" square geomorphic city pieces, eleven 2½" x 10½" semi-geomorphic pieces, and four pages of city guidelines. Published 1977.

With this set of city plans a DM can construct a fairly large walled city in a matter of minutes. Of course, he has to populate the city and add special details, but the time saved by using these geomorphs is enormous. The various walls, towers, buildings, and other structures are clearly mapped out in blue on durable, white graph paper. All the DM has to do is to carefully cut along the marked lines and then fit the square and rectangular pieces together in almost any fashion he desires. A small, but very useful, four-page booklet of city-building guidelines is included.

There really isn't much wrong with this set of geomorphs. The only things that annoyed me were some unexplained shaded areas and the fact that the set isn't as large as I'd like it to be.

I would recommend these city geomorphs to almost any DM.

– Kurt Butterfield

DUNGEON DRAWINGS (Dungeon Drawings, 3813 Stonewall Ct., Independence, MO 64055); $5.00. Designed by Russell McCormick. 30 5½" x 8¾" black & white sheets in a paper folder. Published 1981.

This product consists of a series of illustrations depicting a wide variety of dungeon rooms and corridors complete with furnishings and debris. Apparently, the dungeon referee is expected to design some of his rooms, passageways, and monsters around the items pictured.

This gives the ref a lot of freedom to mold the dungeon as he sees fit, and gives his imagination a swift kick. That's the redeeming value of this play aid; it's crammed with ideas.

However, as good as some of the ideas are, the execution falls far short of acceptable limits. The artist needs to learn a few basic things like anatomy and perspective. I believe many game masters could do as well or better themselves without shelling out five dollars. The logic, too, is questionable. Some rooms are fairly empty while others are crowded with items scattered about without rhyme or reason.

Unless you are a game master who is VERY hard up for ideas I cannot justify the purchase of this play aid. The childlike graphics and cheapness of production make this set almost worthless.

– Denis Loubet

DUNGEON GEOMORPHS, Sets 1-3 (TSR); $6.00. 15 pages of 8½" x 11" geomorphic maps, plus instructions. Play aid for D&D. Published 1980; the three sets of geomorphs were originally published separately in 1976 and 1977.

Each sheet of this booklet can be divided into two square and one rectangular map sections, partially geomorphic (not every corridor will connect with every other, but at least two always will). No scale is given; the maps are covered with ¼" gridsquares, and one square could be taken as anywhere from 5 to 20 feet. Ten feet would probably be about what was intended.

These would be nice for any DM needing to whip up a complex level in a hurry. They are keyed well enough that a given layout could be quickly written down for later use – and, as the ad blurbs say, 45 geomorphs give a lot of possible combinations! Variety is good; we have some areas of many ordinary rooms, some of oddball rooms, and a few of cavern rooms.

The only real drawback is the choice of color; all the maps are printed in the same light-blue ink, which makes them hard to read. The black illustrations on the back of the book look good – the blue maps inside were a disappointment.

At the price, the DUNGEON GEOMORPHS are nice, but not a "must." There are several such products out now, each in a different scale and with slightly different uses. Compare before you buy anything.

– Steve Jackson

DUNGEON TILES (Task Force Games); $9.95. Designed by Steve Cole; art by A. J. Belflower. Boxed set of 108 die-cut counters (½" square), a 5½" x 8½" card that cuts apart into ladders and doors, and 8 8½" x 11" cardstock sheets, die-cut into the "dungeon tiles" that give the set its name. There are 72 tiles 2¼" square, and six larger ones. Also included is a 4-page 8½" x 11" rulebook. Any number of players; playing time indefinite. Designed 1981.

This is another play aid "for use with any fantasy game." The DUNGEON TILES are intended for use with miniature figures; they can be set on a table to represent the paths and rooms that characters pass through in a RPG. Included are a set of movement and sighting rules. Unlike TSR's *Dungeon Geomorphs* (reviewed this issue) these are play aids for all the players, rather than maps for the GM.

The art on the tiles themselves is nice, done in full color. Stone dungeon floors, littered with occasional bones, and a few nice spiral stairs. Most of the use players get out of this set will be from these tiles – they're pretty.

The die-cut counters are adequate, but nothing to get excited about. As for the sheet of ladders – this is obviously an afterthought, and may as well be thrown out. You can draw better doors and ladders yourself. The rules lay out a brief movement and combat system – basically a heavily modified D&D. This seems to be workable, but few GMs are likely to throw out their own methods to adopt it. It will be just as easy to use the tiles with your own combat system, as long as that system is square-based rather than hexagon-based.

In all, a moderately good product, and useful for GMs. But I have to say that I think it's selling for about twice what it ought to. There was no need whatsoever to put it in a box! If only the tiles, and possibly the counters, had been supplied, along with a bag to hold them, the set would have retained 95% of its worth, and could have been marketed at a more reasonable price.

– Steve Jackson

THE FANTASY MASTERS' CODEX 1981 (Metagaming); $10.00. Compiled by Bill Gustafson. One 8½" x 11" 120-page computer-printed book. Published 1981.

The CODEX contains not only an index to all TFT materials published through 1980, it also includes lists of the talents, spells, magic items, potions and equipment – each sorted several ways – a DX adjustment table, a table of saving throws and listings of jobs, races and monsters. The CODEX also reproduces the character sheet and weapons tables from ITL and AM and has a question-and-answer section at the back.

The index provided with the CODEX will undoubtably prove invaluable for TFT players and GMs alike. In addition to its listings from ITL, AM and AW, there are several for *The Treasure of the Silver Dragon, Melee* and *Wizard* and at least one each for *Tollenkar's Lair* and *Death Test 2.* Though supposedly included, if the index contains any references from *Death Test 1* and *Grail Quest,* I haven't found them yet. The DX adjustments and saving throws tables are helpful, too, though their inclusion on the just-released *Fantasy Masters' Screen* certainly lessens their usefulness here.

Unfortunately there are many problems with the CODEX, not the least of which is its $10 price tag – twice that of any of the TFT rule-

books. True, it has more pages, but considering the computer printout format, there is much less material for the price. Some of the lists in the CODEX don't seem necessary; we already have talents and spells sorted by IQ, for instance. Some of the groupings in the sections on race and monsters seem arbitrary and inappropriate. Why are Neanderthals grouped with Hydras and Octopi? Or Uncle Teeth and other sea beasts with different types of Mushrooms? And why *bother* with a listing for height and weight of monsters and races when no values are ever given? The CODEX itself could use a better index. The constant stop-start sequence of the page numbering is annoying, too. Please, Metagaming, number your pages normally if you intend future editions of the CODEX!

While the index to TFT is quite useful (and should have been released separately at a lower price), what Metagaming seems to have with THE FANTASY MASTERS' CODEX 1981 is too little for too much. Unless you *have* to have the index, I'd recommend you grit your teeth and wait for THE FANTASY MASTERS' CODEX 1982, which hopefully will be typeset and cost less.

– William A. Barton

FANTASY MASTERS' SCREEN (Metagaming); $2.00. One 25½" x 11" three-folded thin cardstock screen, backprinted. Published 1981.

My biggest disappointment with Metagaming's *The Fantasy Trip: In the Labyrinth* role-playing system is that it was not released as originally advertised – boxed with color maps and counters, a GM screen and other accessories in addition to the rule books. We still don't have the maps and counters, but at last Metagaming has seen fit to release the FANTASY MASTERS' SCREEN. The FM SCREEN contains, on the GM's (FM's?) side, all the important tables and information necessary to referee a session of TFT: turn sequence and actions, time required and reactions, savings throws and dexterity adjustments, movement rates and to hit/to miss rolls, experience and equipment/magic items/potions costs – and more. Virtually every chart and table from ITL, *Advanced Wizard* and *Advanced Melee* – plus many the three books overlooked – are reproduced here except the weapons tables, spell tables and talents. And the weapons tables, along with damage based on strength, appear on the players' side.

It's extremely handy to have all this information at the GM's fingertips, rather than having it spread out through the three books. A lot of time previously spent flipping through pages can now be devoted to play time instead. The chart of DX adjustments is especially welcome as this is the first time all the various adjustments to a character's dexterity have been compiled in one place (other than the much more expensive *Fantasy Masters' Codex*). The same goes for the chart of saving throws. The presence of these two tables alone make the SCREEN well worth the price.

Some errors do appear to have crept in, though. The savings throws for traps seem incomplete: no mention is made of how to disarm one, for example. The smaller of the two saving throws tables should have been explained, since it's a bit cryptic as is (though it shouldn't take long to figure it out). The presence of two different experience charts could cause some confusion until the GM decides whether to stick with the original or switch to the revised. And there is a big contradiction between the Actions and Movement charts as to whether a crawling man can change weapons or move half his movement allowance after standing up or can only stand up as his only action. The movement chart says he can only stand up. The action chart says otherwise. From what I recall of the rules, the movement chart is the correct one, though it's possible I missed a revision somewhere.

Regardless of what errors did creep in, the FANTASY MASTERS' SCREEN is an item no TFT GM should overlook. Pick it up and never again will you be forced to use an old notebook or (for shame!) a D&D shield in your Labyrinth sessions. And now, if only we could get those maps and counters. . . .

– William A. Barton

MINIATURES

THE EVIL LORD (Ral Partha); $7.98. Six-piece fantasy miniature set in 25mm. Released 1981.

This attractive set forms a scene that might appear on the streets of a fantasy city. Four hulking subhumans bear a pentagonal litter, on which is seated a powerful wizard. A concubine and a leopard lounge beside him, under a billowing canopy. Assembled, the set is more than three inches high, and about the same length.

I really like the concept, and the execution is nice. The figures are not as finely detailed as some Ral Partha has put out, but they're better than hobby average. The four servitors are identical castings and cannot be changed if the litter is to remain stable. This isn't as big a drawback as it might seem, because once the set is painted, the focus of attention is on the wizard and his companions.

All in all, a nice set. Not a lot of use in everyday play, but a great showpiece, and a good inspiration for a special encounter.

– Steve Jackson

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COMPUTER GAMES

ACTION & BUMPING GAMES (Creative Computing); $24.95. 32K game package on disk for the Apple II. (Also available on two cassettes – $11.95 each.) One player; playing time 10 minutes. Cannot be saved. Published 1981.

This package includes six games – *Bumper Blocks, Obstacle Course, Hustle Jr., Moto Jump, Mine Rover* and *Road Machine*. All amount to exercises in eye-hand coordination, brightened by judicious use of sound and color. Many levels of difficulty are possible.

It is hard to find anything to criticize about this package. The worst I can say is, some of these games are highly addictive. God knows why we play these things – but if you enjoy arcade games, you will like these.

– *Forrest Johnson*

MONSTER MASH & BATTLESHIP (Micro-80 Inc.); $12.95. Cassette for the 16K TRS-80. One player; playing time less than 10 minutes. Published 1980.

These two programs are available on the same tape. MONSTER MASH has the big "monster" chase the small "player" around and around an open maze. The monster is generally faster than the player unless the player runs. Running tires you. The game ends when the monster "mashes" you. Victory is measured by duration of survival.

BATTLESHIP resembles the Milton Bradley game. Two players set up "ships" (consisting of one or more adjacent blocks) in a ten by ten grid. Neither player sees the other's setup. Each player then calls out one or more individual grids in an attempt to strike ("sink") all the opponent's chosen blocks. Every hit is reported but the shooter is not told how big the ship was or where the rest of the ship lies. The computer in this game takes the place of one player and will both set up the grids and inform you of its shots and your hits. The computer plays a pretty good game.

All in all, this is a very good buy for kids. The games are simple and well done. However, serious gamers will quickly find these games monotonous.

– *Jon Mishcon*

TORPEDO FIRE (Strategic Simulations); $59.95. 48K Applesoft disk by John Lyon and Joel Billings. Box includes 8-page rulebook, 5 charts and reference sheets, 2 fibre-tip markers and one protractor. 1-2 players; playing time 3 hours. Published 1981.

This subject is a natural for computers – a limited intelligence simulation of a submarine attack on a convoy. The game can be played solo, with the computer controlling the submarines, or it can be played against an opponent. The designers candidly list two boardgames – *Submarine* by Avalon Hill and *Up-Scope* by SPI – in the bibliography. (This unusual and forthright step is worthy of emulation.)

There are a number of attractive features. The graphics are beautiful. The error trapping is generally efficient, if rather cumbersome. The "execute" command, which allows a dry run of your turn, displayed in sequence, is very helpful when it works.

Unfortunately, there are many flaws, more than I can conveniently list. There is at least one genuine bug in the search subroutine – and it is very irritating to have the program crash a couple hours into the game. The error trapping somehow missed the "fire surface guns" order – once you enter that, it is graven in stone. This last is a double flaw, since it is impossible to fire the surface guns accurately without the use of trigonometry.

I might be able to forgive all this if the game were enjoyable, but I did not find it so. The convoy player spends most of his time chasing sonar ghosts and killing fish. For his part, the submarine commander usually misses with his torpedoes. This might be realistic, but it makes for a dull game. On the other hand, the victory conditions are highly *un*realistic. The convoy commander gets no points for preserving his ships, only for sinking submarines. If the convoy eludes the submarines entirely (a distinct possibility), the result is a draw.

I cannot help but feel that Strategic Simulations has taken a wrong turn somewhere. I hope they find their way again soon.

– *Forrest Johnson*

PUBLICATIONS

ABYSS (Ragnarok Enterprises, 1402 21st St. NW, Washington, DC 20036). $1/issue, subscriptions $5/year (6 issues). 19-page, 8½" x 5½" soft cover magazine. Editor: Dave Nalle. First published 1979.

ABYSS prints articles on all aspects of fantasy role-playing. There are narratives of game adventures, new monsters, characters, and magic, and modifications to combat and magic. Most articles relate to *Dungeons and Dragons*. Payment is in credit (ABYSS subscription or other Ragnarok gaming products).

There are many good ideas here. Those who play D&D, in any of its incarnations or variants, will get as much inspiration as from the larger, slicker magazines. There are critical hit systems, size modifications, social systems, adventure scenarios, and excellent additions to the *New Ysgarth Rules*.

What? *New Ysgarth Rules*?? That's a game published by Ragnarok Enterprises. It's a D&D spin-off, replete with attack ratings, weapon skills, spell points, and other things. It's got lots of charts and formulae, is really less similar to D&D than other well-known games, and rather more logical than some. Only, *New Ysgarth Rules* isn't well-known. So, if an ABYSS article lists attack/defense ratings for a monster, or breakdown of skill points, that article is wasted on most gamers. ABYSS isn't going to attract readers if it has many articles they don't understand.

Physical deficiencies don't detract; the price is fair for the amount of hard copy. The publishers are creative, doing their best on an obviously miniscule budget, but it is difficult to recommend a magazine which won't please the majority of gamers. ABYSS is trying to expand coverage of the gaming field, but to date most of the writers have limited themselves to D&D or *New Ysgarth Rules*. If you've got ideas on other games, write something for ABYSS; if you're curious, buy a copy.

– *Ronald Pehr*

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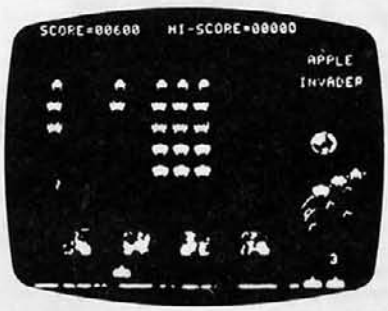

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THE TRIBES OF CRANE

You, task chief of the Leopard people wandering tribe of Crane, sit in your great wagon awaiting news from your swift searching outriders. Suddenly hoof beats approach. The outriders leap from their mounts to your wagon flushed with excitement for they know full well the meaning of their news. But one sector to the North the great merchant caravan of the Impala people has been spotted. The order is given "To arms . . . to arms!" You snap your orders, "Gather my captains of hundreds. Let all know the tactic will be enfilade right. Now my arms, my mount." You heard that Kate, chief of the Impala people, has chosen a stand and defend tactic twice before; will he again? You know also that the Impala people are fine warriors as are all the people of the many tribes. This will be no raid of the strong on the weak, but rather a mighty clash of the ***TRIBES OF CRANE*** *. . . .*

The **Tribes of Crane** is a unique correspondence game, allowing for interaction between players and the fantasy world of Crane and each other through a continuous game that may be entered at any time.

As a new player you will start as the chief of one of the many wandering tribes of Crane. Perhaps your tribe will be of the Sea people or Caravan merchants.

As chief you will know many secrets of your people and their lands, but there will be much you have still to learn of the lost secrets of Crane. It will be you who decide if your people will remain in their familiar homeland or begin a journey to new lands as you strive to increase your herds, train warriors, and learn of the ancient lost secrets that can move your people toward prosperity and dominance.

The land of Crane is a complete fantasy world with a full range of geography from the permanent ice of the polar regions, to the deserts, and tropical forests of the equator.

Cities dot the continents of Crane providing centers of trade and homes for the powerful Shamans and King Lords.

The creatures of Crane are as varied as its geography. Cattle goats and the caribou are the mainstay of the tribes, depending on the geography. But horses and the great mancarrying war hawks are important to the fierce warriors. Many undomesticated creatures also inhabit Crane such as the Euparkeria, a hugh bipedal lizard that feeds on cattle in the grasslands of Crane.

Interaction between players is very common. Alliance, trade, and combat are always possible. Combat is determined in part by a comparison of tactics used by the antagonists, the relative number of warriors, and the geography.

The games objective is to increase the relative strength and prosperity of your tribe which is measured by different criteria, depending upon the type of tribe, and thus obtain points. Players try to obtain high average points per turn thus placing new players on a par with those who have been playing longer.

The **Tribes of Crane** may be entered for $10.50 which includes the first two turns, set up turn, a rule book and all necessary material (except return postage). Thereafter, turns are $3.50 each. A rule book may be purchased for $3.50.

In Europe, contact Mitre Wargames, 29 High Street, Maidstone Kent, England.

Send to: **Schubel & Son**
P.O. Box 214848,
Sacramento, CA 95821

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BREAKOUT (Conflict Simulations of Australia); cover price $2.00. For subscription information, contact M.S.P. Ltd., 18 Fonseca St., Mordialloc, Victoria, Australia. First issue 1981.

This is the first serious wargaming publication we've seen from "down under," though Australia and New Zealand have a thriving game hobby. BREAKOUT number 1 is a 5½" x 8½", 46-page magazine, well typeset and printed. It makes an effort to cover the entire wargame hobby; thus, the lead articles cover *C.V.* and Napoleonics, the fictional piece is SF, and the four columns cover, respectively, true battle incidents, D&D, plastic kit building, and industry news. (I hope I'm distinguishing articles from columns properly; it's hard to tell in a first issue.) The news is more up-to-date than that in some U.S. magazines!

On the whole, a creditable effort. The mix of materials is good for the hobby at large, and the general quality is high. The reviews are perceptive. Some of the articles are overwritten – a little more editing was called for – and the pages are gray. No illustrations – just ads, one map, and lots of small type.

I look forward to seeing further issues of BREAKOUT. The per-issue price from Australia might be prohibitive for some (no airmail prices were given – write and ask) but for a club library, I think this one would be worthwhile.

– Steve Jackson

INTERPLAY (Metagaming); $9 for 6 bimonthly issues. Edited by Trace Hallowell. 5½" x 8½," 36-page magazine dedicated to Metagaming products exclusively. First issue 1981.

Philosophically, this magazine is little brother to Avalon Hill's *The General*. It is a one-company magazine, dedicated to "idea exchange and communication among dedicated gamers." Articles in the first issue were split between TFT supplemental material (new high-IQ spells, gem creation, the Silver Dragon's secret, a micro-micro quest, and a column by the new TFT system editor) and game errata and designer notes (for *The Air-Eaters Strike Back, Rommel's Panzers,* and *The Lords of UnderEarth*). Artwork is entirely black-and-white, including the cover.

If you love *The Fantasy Trip*, then INTERPLAY has you right in its palm – it is a source of "official" TFT material. I found the material useful, particularly gem creation and that Animate Weapon spell. INTERPLAY will also be required reading for anyone who has bought the most recent Metagaming games – it is the source of "official" errata. I should also mention that very few pages are used for advertisement (which makes sense – the articles are themselves advertisements for Metagaming). The magazine even gave me a sense of deja vu – it looks like one of the primeval issues of *The Space Gamer*.

Problems? (Aren't there always?) Production standards could use a lift – the necessary map for the micro-micro quest is missing, one article was pasted up so that the fiction and non-fiction segments meld confusingly into each other, and you can't tell the letters from the replies in the "Letters" section. Grammar was allowed to roam wherever it would. INTERPLAY also faces competition and a credibility gap when it comes to TFT material – in part because Metagaming is also going to publish a yearly supplement for TFT, which will no doubt include the best from INTERPLAY. It is important to note that, since INTERPLAY is exclusively dedicated to Metagaming products, this magazine will not review, comment on, or create variants for non-Metagaming games.

If you can't live without Metagaming designer notes and errata, then you'll have to have INTERPLAY. For TFT material, it seems to me that you should buy the annual supplement instead. I found the first issue to be useful (though not well-written or well-edited).

– W. G. Armintrout

PBM Update

UNIVERSE II (Clemens and Associates)

Company News. All four quadrants are still operating at capacity. Anyone wishing to join may request that their name be added to our waiting list. New ships are assigned as openings develop.

Quadrant I. The war between the Imperial Australian Star Fleet and the Holy New Zealand Alliance is still raging in the area round Mufrid. The headquarters for the British Empire was destroyed by the flagship of the UFO Alliance.

Quadrant II. The Foundation continues to spread its influence throughout the quadrant. The duel between the Phalanx and the Firearrow has forced both to break off the battle for repairs.

Quadrant III. The Terran attack on Ardy seems to have been delayed. A group of Terran starships has been given official privateer status by the Muar Empire and are identified as Muar Raiders.

Quadrant IV. The Unity Alliance is continuing its massive buildup by establishing more colonies. The Excelsior has destroyed another starship and appears to be carving out an empire.

– Jon Clemens

STAR CLUSTER OMEGA (C-T Simulations)

Rules Clarification. Salvage Technology allows a player to salvage the remains of destroyed fighters, ships, and orbital defenses only. It *does not* apply to Trooper losses.

Game News. The MARS alliance is under heavy attack. The homeworld of one member was captured, but Magic Kingdom totally destroyed the Sunfire fleet which attacked his homeworld. Several empires in Dimension 500 are approaching the ability to travel to adjoining dimensions and the Kosmoleans fear that this will only result in more strife and death. Defensive alliances should be formed in all dimensions as quickly as possible to protect peaceful empires from these savage aggressors.

– James Thompson

DeJager & Co.

Company News. Due to the new printer we are happy to announce that our turnaround time for turns will be reduced from four mail days to three mail days. As usual if we fail to keep within this limit then the turn is free.

Playtesting for our new game *Econostar* is progressing slowly. This new game will combine the tactics of ship to ship combat with the strategies required in the stock market.

Watch this space for further news.

– Peter DeJager

LORDS OF VALETIA (Gamesmaster Publishers Assn.)

Company News. Due to the computer which runs all elements of the game being in the shop for maintenance, the scheduled restart is delayed indefinitely. If the machine has not been returned by May 30, the gamemaster will begin to manually type the background papers for registered players. A new search for an investor to replace the one lost in December is being considered seriously.

Rule Change. The turn equivalency rate upon restart has been determined at 1.5:1 during the catch-up period, not 3:1 as suggested before. This means a terrestrial month will equal 6 weeks Valetian.

Game News. As per the April TSG advertisement; additional postponed pending restart.

– Elmer Hinton

THE TRIBES OF CRANE (Schubel & Son)

Game News. The Dark Union fails in its attempt to storm the Grand Union city of Jarm on Crane I.

Tabor, the legendary general of the Dark Union, takes over command of the Dark Union and barbarian forces on Nisa Island, Crane I.

Months ago the Grand Union laid siege to the powerful Dark Union fort and training base on Nisa Island in the Highwater Sea. The Grand Union has been making its plans for taking the mighty fort as the Dark Union brought up additional strength from the south. Now the Dark Union has added the expertise of one of its greatest generals to the defense operations.

The Barbarian city of Gilpin, Crane I, falls to the Blood Trust Warlords. The city is systematically looted before the Warlords move off.

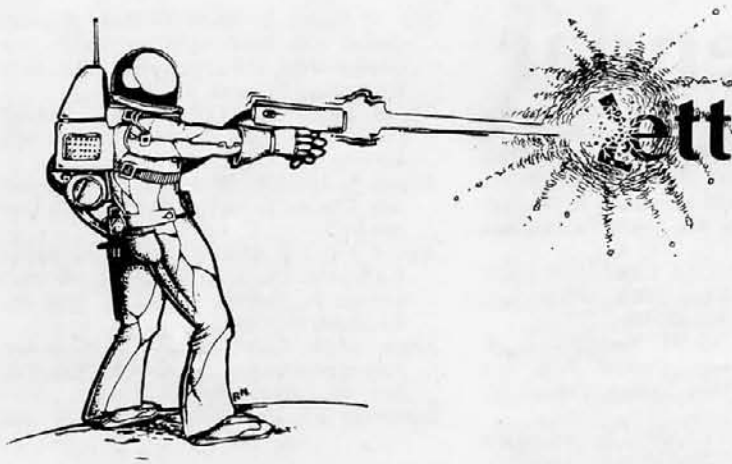
STARMASTER (Schubel & Son)

Game News. The Tamos Empire has attacked and captured the Olcos Federation's homeworld of Kermit 3. The Tamos are finding the Olcos' society and production facilities so different from their own that there is now talk of a deal with the old leaders of Kermit 3. They would act as Imperial Governor of Kermit 3 so that they can again rule their planet and the Tamos can take advantage of the Olcos' production capacity.

The third dimension universe is shocked by the attack of the Gammau Cybernauts of the fourth dimension. The Gammau Cybernauts are a life form that is a fusion of machine and protoplasm. They build themselves in hundreds of diverse shapes for many tasks. Now their gigantic war machines have been gated into the third dimension. Their weapons have the fourth dimension ability to speed up time. Their targets die of old age or rust away to dust scrap metal. The Gammau Cybernauts' war machines are constructed of very tough tesseractic fourth dimensional steel.

– George Schubel

PBM Update reports on professionally-moderated play-by-mail games. Notices are monthly. Copy deadline is 60 days previous to the first of the month, for the issue in which the notice is to appear. (Deadline for the March issue is January 1.) All copy should be typed and double-spaced. Notices should not exceed 200 words in length. TSG reserves the right to edit copy as necessary.



Letters

I am writing in protest to Metagaming's handling of their role-playing game *The Fantasy Trip*. Splitting the game into the three books, without maps, counters, referee shield, box, etc. was a grave mistake and miscalculation of the market.

Metagaming needs a blockbuster title in their line, and TFT is their best shot. Many of us would truly like to see such a high quality product with the best PHYSICAL standards possible by the publisher.

I ask all the readers of this fine magazine who feel as I do to sit down and write a simple note stating their preference for the *complete Fantasy Trip*. Include the signatures of your fellow gaming club members, dungeon delvers and anyone else who cares about the future of a great system.

Send them to me at the address below and I will in turn forward the whole package to the people in charge at Metagaming, letting them know how we all feel.

Burton Glass
5768 Milford Lane
Milford, Ohio 45150

Upon reading Jerry Epperson's letter in TSG 39 all I could think was "WHY ME" . . . over and over. When he said that game was hard to find, he wasn't joking. There are only about 25 of those games scattered around the country and I'd very much like to get them back since they are totally unplayable even as they were intended to be played. This was an attempt on my part to write and print a game with no prior experience and a nonexistent budget about three years ago. We've come a long way since that early effort.

Unfortunately we used the same name on the new game we printed and advertised in TSG 34. This is a totally different game in every way which, because of unforeseen and uncontrollable difficulties, has not even been released yet. We have been having problems with the boxes and the games will not be shipped until the first of June. We were forced to ship the games that were ordered from the ad in makeshift boxes until the others were ready. This is also why you have not received a copy to review yet.

I an including with this letter a copy of the new *Hyper Battle* to review along with copies of the artwork which will appear on the boxes. When the boxes are ready we will mail you a box for this game and a complete game for your records. Please give this game to Jerry to review and tell him a box is coming. He can keep the game compliments of us. Also tell him we're sorry about the money he spent on the other game. We hope this makes up for it.

Richard Slabbekoorn
Future and Fantasy Games

Well, good luck. You deserve it. If everybody in the business could be as up-front about their failures, there would be fewer turkeys on the shelves.

– SJ

News & Plugs

Automated Simulations has released *The Dragon's Eye*, an outdoor fantasy quest game. Available on cassette for the 32K PET and on disk for the 48K Apple. Price: $24.95.

The Origins awards nominations are out. As expected, the largest companies dominate. TSR took 11 nominations, SPI 10, Avalon Hill 9, GDW 6. Other nominations included *The Space Gamer, Raid on Iran* and *The Fantasy Trip*. Some results seem chimerical – Avalon Hill took four out of five nominations in the "Best 1980 Computer Game," for example. *Ace of Aces* was cited for a special award. Members of the Academy of Adventure Gaming Arts & Design (see N&P, TSG 37) are voting on the nominations; results will be announced at Origins.

A new magazine is being put together based on *Empire of the Petal Throne*. The first issue is being readied for July release. For more information, send an SASE to: Devecee Publishing Co., POB 561, Fenton, MO 63026.

Now it can be told: GDW has announced the Fifth Frontier War. Issue 9 of the *Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society* will be a special war issue with details of the combatants, orders of battle, and background data. Simultaneously, GDW will release a game based on the war, set in the Spinward Marches.

GDW has a new address: POB 1646, Bloomington, IL 61701.

Another shake-up at SPI; their game design and development system is being revamped. Dave Ritchie has been purged, but will continue to contribute as a freelancer.

Tim Kask is setting up a new magazine called *Adventure Gaming*, with the backing of certain Ohio gentlemen. First issue is set for Origins.

Forest Brown, of Martian Metals, was surprised this spring when he got a letter from Paramount Studios. Paramount was releasing the movie *Dragonslayer* in June, and offering rights to licensed *Dragonslayer* products. Forest already knew that he *held* the trademark to "Dragonslayer," having defended it from SPI (see N&P, TSG 29). Paramount was not pleased to hear from Forest's attorney. Seems they had already sold a couple "Dragonslayer" licenses, including one to – you guessed it – SPI (which will evidently be producing a movie tie-in adventure game). Forest tells us that after a short two weeks of negotiations, Martian Metals got a cash settlement, a percentage of the royalties, and the right to produce movie tie-in figures. Score one for the gaming industry.

SPI has sold five games to Avalon Hill, including the popular *Freedom in the Galaxy*.

Automated Simulations has released a game called *Crush, Crumble and Chomp*, which sounds like a computer version of *The Creature That Ate Sheboygan*. Disk for the 48K Apple II+ and 32K TRS-80; cassette for the 16K TRS-80 and 32K Atari. Price: $29.95.

Microsoft's *Olympic Decathlon*, programmed by Tim Smith, is the winner of *Creative Computing's* "Most Creative Game of 1980" award. *Olympic Decathlon* is available on disk for the 48K Apple II and the 32K TRS-80, and on cassette for the 16K TRS-80 (Level I or II). Price: $24.95.

Muse Software has released *RobotWar*, a "computer literacy teaching" program intended for the 48K Apple II with DOS. Price: $39.95.

The Supreme Court has agreed to hear a case on the right of citizens to play pinball. The city of Mesquite, Texas, appealed after a lower court struck down a city ordinance banning children under 18 from playing pinball without the presence of a parent or guardian. The ordinance was passed four years ago after complaints about truancy, fights and drug problems at pinball parlors.

Calendar

July 3-5: ORIGINS '81. To be held in Dunfee Motel, San Mateo, CA. Contact Origins '81, P.O. Box 5833, San Jose, CA 95150.

July 9-12: 1981 IMPS NATIONAL CONVENTION. Scale model con. SASE to Ed Cameron, 29 Mathew St., South Farmingdale, NY 11735.

July 11-12: MINNESOTA CAMPAIGN FIVE. Contact Mr. Jeff Berry, 343 E. 19th St. Apt. 4B, Minneapolis, MN 55046.

July 16-19: CWA-CON '81. Wargaming & adventure-gaming con. Contact P.O. Box 10397, Ft. Dearborn Station, Chicago, IL 60610.

July 17-19: FANTASY FAIRE. SF and gaming con. Contact 1855 West Main St., Alhambra, CA 91801.

July 17-19: ODYSSEY '81. Con featuring all kinds of gaming. Sponsored by the UNH Simulations Games Club; for information contact R. Bradford Chase, UNHSGC, Memorial Union Building, Durham, NH 03824.

July 17-20: 9th ANNUAL FLYING BUFFALO CONVENTION. Contact P.O. Box 1467, Scottsdale, AZ 85252.

July 18-23: FANTASY GM's WORKSHOP/SEMINAR. Contact Maine Wargames Association, 102 Front St., Bath, ME 04530 or (207) 443-3711.

July 23-26. GENCON EAST. Contact at P.O. Box 139, Middletown, NJ 17748.

July 31-August 2: MAINECON. Boardgames, miniatures, FRP. Contact Mr. John Wheeler, Director, Mainecon, 102 Front St., Bath, ME 04530.

July 31-August 2: NANCON 88-IV. General gaming con. Send SASE to Nan's Game Headquarters, 118 Briargrove Center, 6100 Westheimer, Houston, TX 77057.

August 7-9: BABEL CON '81. Star Trek/SF con. Contact S.T.A.R. OKC, P.O. Box 565, Bethany, OK 73008.

August 8: DRAGONMEET IV. SF&F gamers con. Chelsea Town Hall, Kings Road, London SW3.

August 8-9: 5th ANNUAL BANROG AREA WARGAMERS CONVENTION. Contact Edward F. Stevens, Jr., 83 N. Main St., Rockland, ME 04841.

August 13-16: GENCON XIV. FRPG & new gaming releases. Contact GenCon XIII, P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva, WI 53147.

September 3-7: DENVENTION TWO. SF con. Contact Denvention Two, P.O. Box 11545, Denver, CO 80211 or (303) 433-9774.

September 4-7: GLASC VI. Simulation gaming con, including monster games. Contact GLASC Secretary, c/o L. Daniel, 20550 Wyandotte St., Canoga Park, CA 91306.

September 11-13: DRAGON FLIGHT. A FRP con, to be held in Seattle. Contact The Brass Dragon Society, P.O. Box 33872, Seattle, WA 98133.

September 25-27: GALACTICON 81. SF con. Contact Galacticon 81, P.O. Box 491, Daytona Beach, FL 32015.

CONVENTION ORGANIZERS – let us know about your con! Free publicity never hurts.

Reader Ads

Reader ads are available to individuals (not to companies). $5 per insertion; limit 20 words or four lines.

WORLD EMPEROR – Play by mail. Rule your own planet and conquer other planets. 20-page rulebook $2. $1 per turn. PTE Games, 12635 256th St., Maple Ridge, B.C., Canada V2X 7C5.

ADVERTISERS

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California Pacific . . . . . *inside front cover*
Central Texas Computing *11*
Compleat Strategist . . . . . *back cover*
Creative Computing *36*
FGU *7, 27*
Future and Fantasy Games *31*
Game Merchant *35*
GDW *29*
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The Good Guys by JD

ONLY SECONDS BEFORE HUNK, SMELLY, AND THE PRINCESS ARE TO DIE, A REBEL RESCUE FORCE ARRIVES!!
INTERESTING DOCKING TECHNIQUE YOU'VE PICKED UP THERE, BORIS...
REBEL SPACESHIP
...SHUT UP SNIDELY, AT LEAST I HIT THE RIGHT SHUTTLE BAY!!...
©81 JDW
FOLLOW ME SNIDELY!! LET'S SAVE HUNK AND THE CUTE BROAD!
BUT BORIS!
ACK!
VORP!
WE ARE OUTNUMBERED BY 20 TO 1!!
ZOT!
ARG!
VORP!
BUT...
SHUT UP AND DON'T WORRY! I SAW THE MOVIE, AND NO ONE CAN HIT ANYTHING!
A SECOND LATER...
OOPS GEE!!! SNIDELY OLE BOY, SPEAK TO ME!...
EXIT
(MULTIPLE ZOTS!)
THESE GUYS ARE THE LOUSY SHOTS?!?...
LISTEN, IF WE CAN SOMEHOW 'OUT FLANK THEM, WE CAN... (WHAT THE.)....
ZOT
ZAP!
I THINK I'VE BEEN HIT....
(SUDDENLY!!)
KAWAM!!
INTERESTING DOCKING TECHNIQUE YOU'VE PICKED UP THERE, DIRK...
REMEMBER VET
ED... SHUT UP AND TELL ME WHY ALL THESE GUYS HAVE THEIR HANDS IN THE AIR...
WE'RE SURROUNDED MEN... GIVE UP!!

Invasion Orion: Can You Defeat The Klaatu and Your Computer?

Look your computer straight in the eye, load in the new **Invasion Orion** and suddenly you are the Fleet Admiral, the Commander-In-Chief. And only you can stop the alien forces: the robotic Klaatu who have just invaded your Stellar Union space.

You command as many as nine starships; each ship spends energy on moving, on shielding itself, on firing its three weapon systems—destructor beams, missiles, torpedoes. There are 30 different types of starships—all armed with such a fantastic array as to intimidate the Klaatu.

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There are several options for the players of this game. They may adopt the roles of the actual Argonauts, or may create their own new heroes to see if they can do as well as those of the legend. In either case their characters will encounter the types of adventure faced by the crew of the Argo, all under the guidance and assistance of a gamemaster. They may continue this style of play as a campaign, with new scenarios available from Task Force or created by the gamemaster. Several scenarios may be repeatedly played as war games, rather than as role play, suitable for two sided play (or perhaps as solitaire games). The players in a campaign game may explore the game map, and obtain the mini-scenarios pertaining to the various feature locations designated on the map. Finally, the game is designed as a coherent system, that allows all of these options to be pursued, so that the same characters might be counters in a board game one evening, and role-played individuals in a fantasy adventure the next evening.

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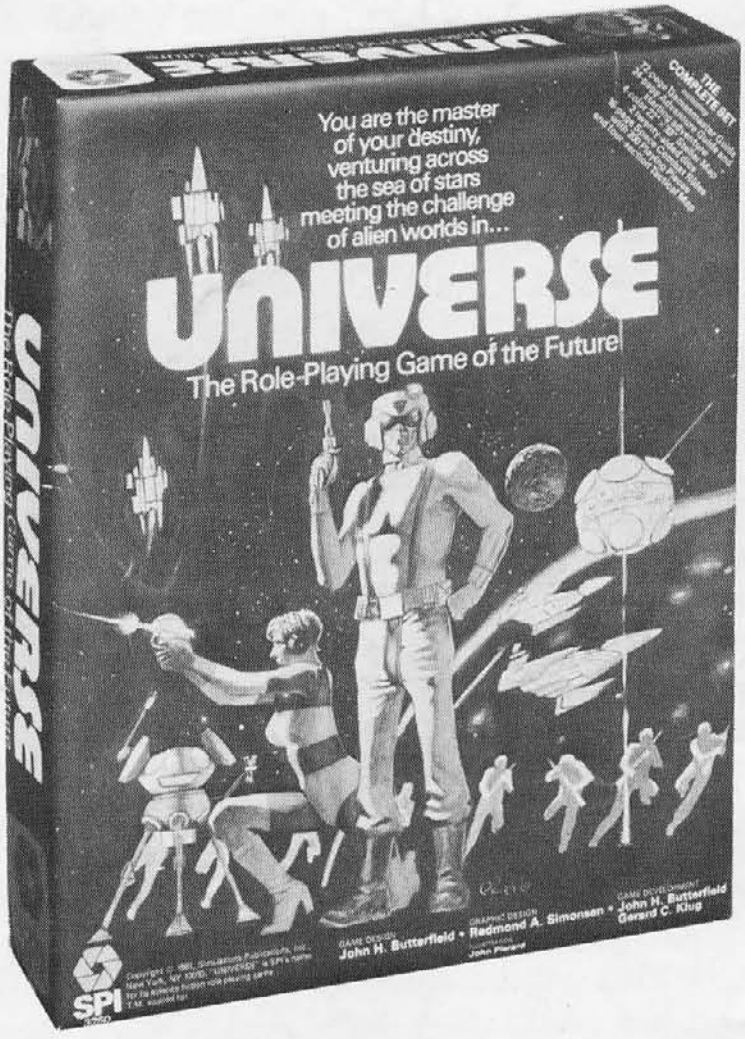
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